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Palm
Aluminum Collection

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008



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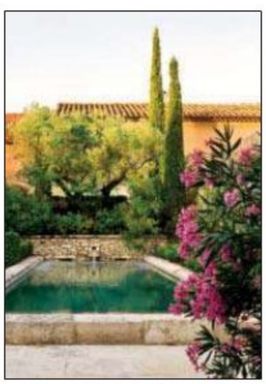


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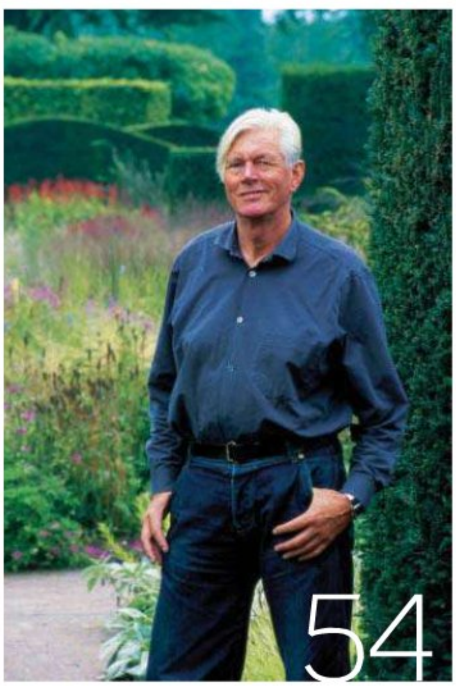


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On the cover: Featured on page 78 and photographed by Clive Nichols, this garden in Saint-Rémy organizes walled outdoor rooms in a linear fashion, inviting fresh experiences in each one: swimming, dining and picking fruit.



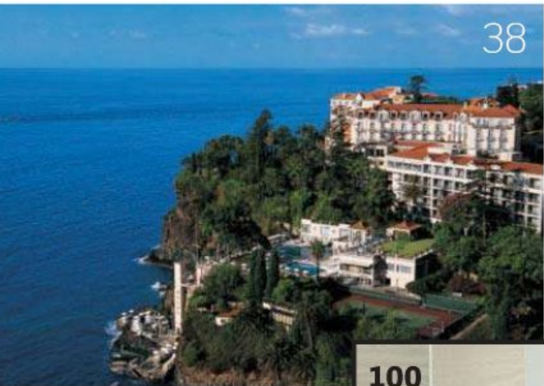
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: NICOLA BROWNE; CLIVE NICHOLS (2); JERRY HARPUR; PATRICK SORDOILLET/STICHTING KUNSTBOEK


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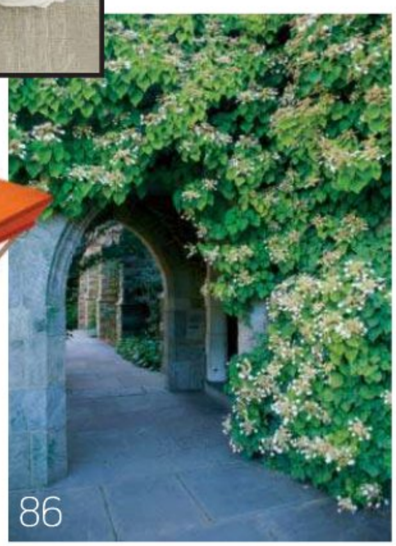


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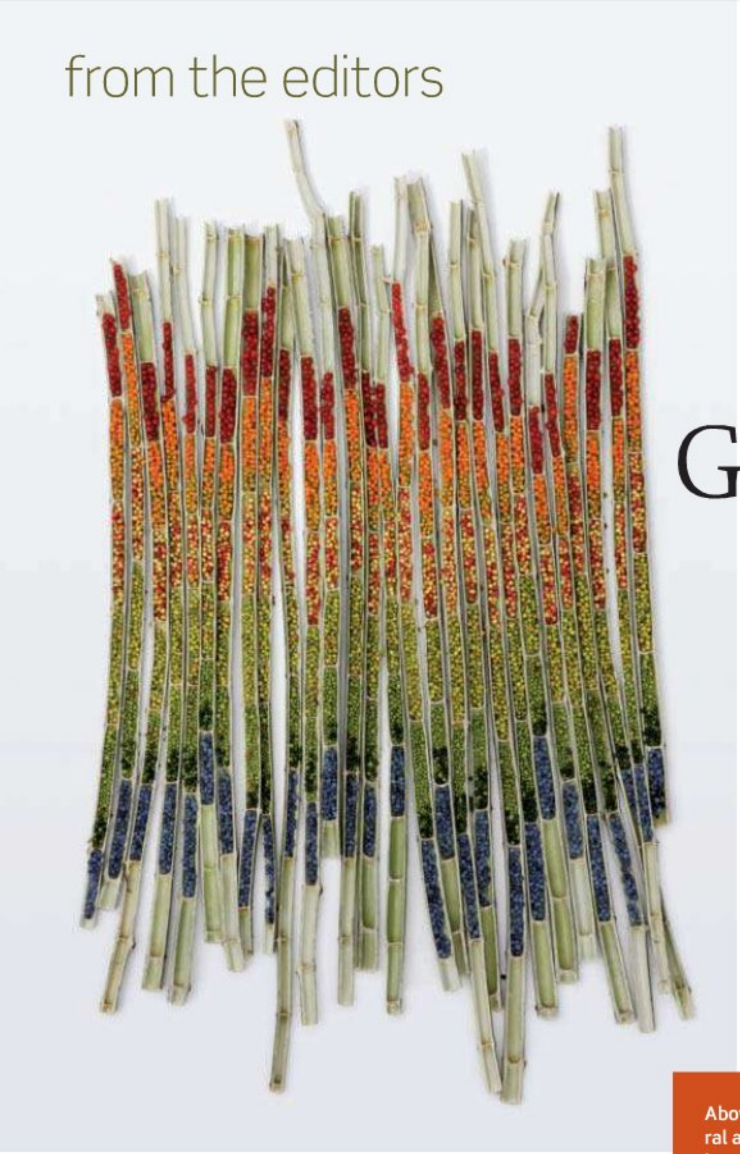
Departments

■ *For more, check out gardendesign.com.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: JANUS ET CIE; ROB CARDILLO; MOMA; VICTOR SHRAGER; COURTESY ORIENT-EXPRESS HOTELS (UK) LTD; NICOLA BROWNE

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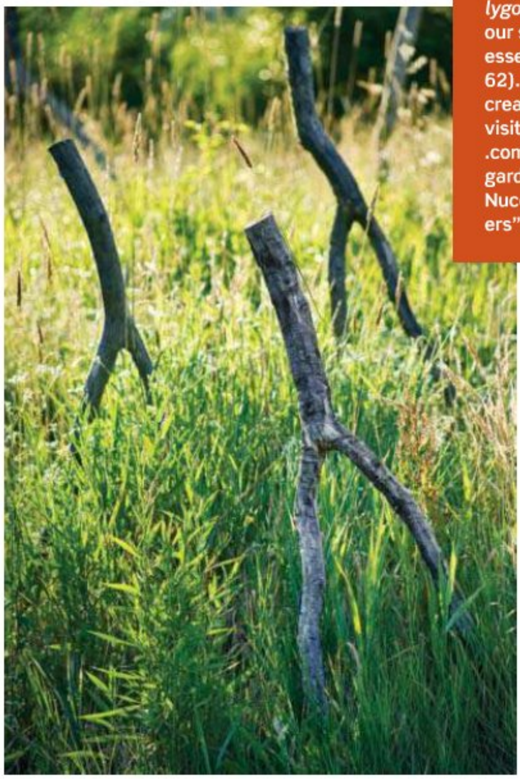
Getting Out

IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR MISSION TO SEEK OUT THE MOST PROVOCATIVE INNOVATIONS in landscape architecture and garden design, the first issue of 2008 brings you the best in contemporary European gardens, a foretelling of great things to anticipate in all of our issues this coming year and beyond.

Our editor-at-large Joanna Fortnam, who now resides in London after five years on staff stateside, brings us "The Art of Living," a fresh take on the gardens of Provence (page 70). As she says, "It's easy to think you know a place, and because of all the 'Provençal style' fed into the cultural water supply — lavender oil, 'French country' restaurants, rustic window treatments — I had a preconceived notion of Provence." Yet the reality of her experience last April, with iris lining the hedgerows and frogs singing in the ponds, was a revelation. "Early in the season, empty of tourists and with perfect weather, the slow-paced, refined way of life was like time out of time — and I made plans to move there immediately," she half-jokes.

Noel Kingsbury's visit to Hermanshoff (page 44), a sustainable prairie-style public garden in Germany, underscores landscape architecture's role as an art form that can change the world. "The sleeping giants that will help us solve the climate crisis are design and architecture and landscape architecture," said Al Gore in his speech to the members of the American Society of Landscape Architects in October. With its multiple biotypes — ideal compositions of soil, light, moisture and plants — presenting solutions for situations with low-water, shallow alkaline soil, shade and more, Hermanshoff serves as an example to the world that gardens friendly to the planet can and should be easy on the eyes as well.

Above: If you like floral artist Rob Plattel's berry-sorting *Polygonum* stalks, see our story on organic essentialism (page 62). For more on this creation and Plattel, visit gardendesign.com. Below: A French garden features Marc Nucera's "tree walkers" (page 74).



In the Netherlands, Piet Oudolf continues to demonstrate the creative possibilities of the New Wave movement and the wonders of native American prairie plants as he redesigns his own garden (page 54). In Belgium, landscape designer Kristof Swinnen takes a sophisticated approach that is as inviting as it is streamlined (page 28), and floral design maverick Daniël Ost creates a three-dimensional abstraction of nature at a Sint-Niklaas estate, shaping boxwoods and hornbeams into a magical forest (page 46). And speaking of floral design, take a peek at the latest European trend — a chic approach to nature as sculpture (page 62). Meanwhile in Scotland, Ian Hamilton Finlay's legacy of Little Sparta is an outside-the-box exploration of sculpture within nature (page 90).

Throughout the year as we travel the globe in search of the great gardens of our time, we will play our part to cross-fertilize ideas between our native grounds and abroad. Join us on our adventures. — **FROM THE EDITORS**

TOP TO BOTTOM: CHRIS VAN KOEVERDEN; CLIVE NICHOLS


CALL FOR ENTRIES
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
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Professionals: Entry forms due by Friday, February 1; submissions must be received by Friday, February 15.
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The Residential Design category award recipients will be featured in the pages of upcoming 2008 issues of Garden Design magazine and on the Garden Design website at www.gardendesign.com, as well as in Landscape Architecture magazine; the ASLA website, www.asla.org; and in many other design and construction industry and general interest media.
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Round Collection, design by Christophe Pillet.
Photo Tom Vack, Jardins du Luxembourg Paris, December 2006.
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LIFE OF THE *Party*





ASLA/Garden Design Reception

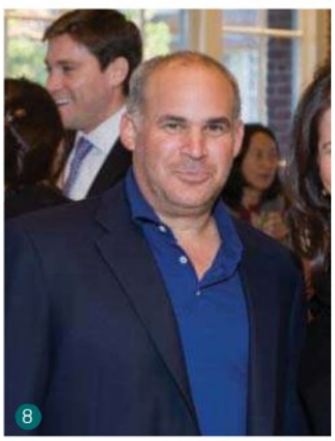
During the 2007 American Society of Landscape Architects' (ASLA) annual meeting and expo, *Garden Design* hosted a reception in honor of the winners of the prestigious ASLA Residential Design Awards. Held in the stunning new JANUS et Cie showroom in the San Francisco Design Center, it was THE party for over 600 ASLA members and design industry dignitaries.

1. Charles Swanson, Birth of Venus; Diane Turner, GD publisher; Jonathan Pedersen, Bailey Nurseries; Donna Dorian, GD editor; Pete Georgiadis, Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet; Sarah Kinbar, GD editor
2. Dat Pham, Living Green
3. Kay Estey, San Francisco Flower & Garden Show
4. & 5. Guests enjoyed wine provided by St. Supery
6. Bill Marken, GD editor emeritus; Janice Feldman, CEO JANUS et Cie; Diane Turner
7. New JANUS et Cie showroom
8. Richard Sperber, CEO ValleyCrest
9. *Garden Design* party in full swing















UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2008

Garden Design Live! in San Francisco

Come see five acres of spectacular garden displays, including *Garden Design's* own sponsored garden, during the 2008 San Francisco Flower & Garden Show at The Cow Palace from March 12-16. Designers and manufacturers come from around the globe to showcase what's hot in outdoor design.

Last year, *Garden Design's* outdoor vignette, Martini Modern, a '50s inspired styling meets redwood forest, landed a gold medal. So you won't want to miss what we're doing this year! Hope to see you there...

Special thanks to our 2007 partners:

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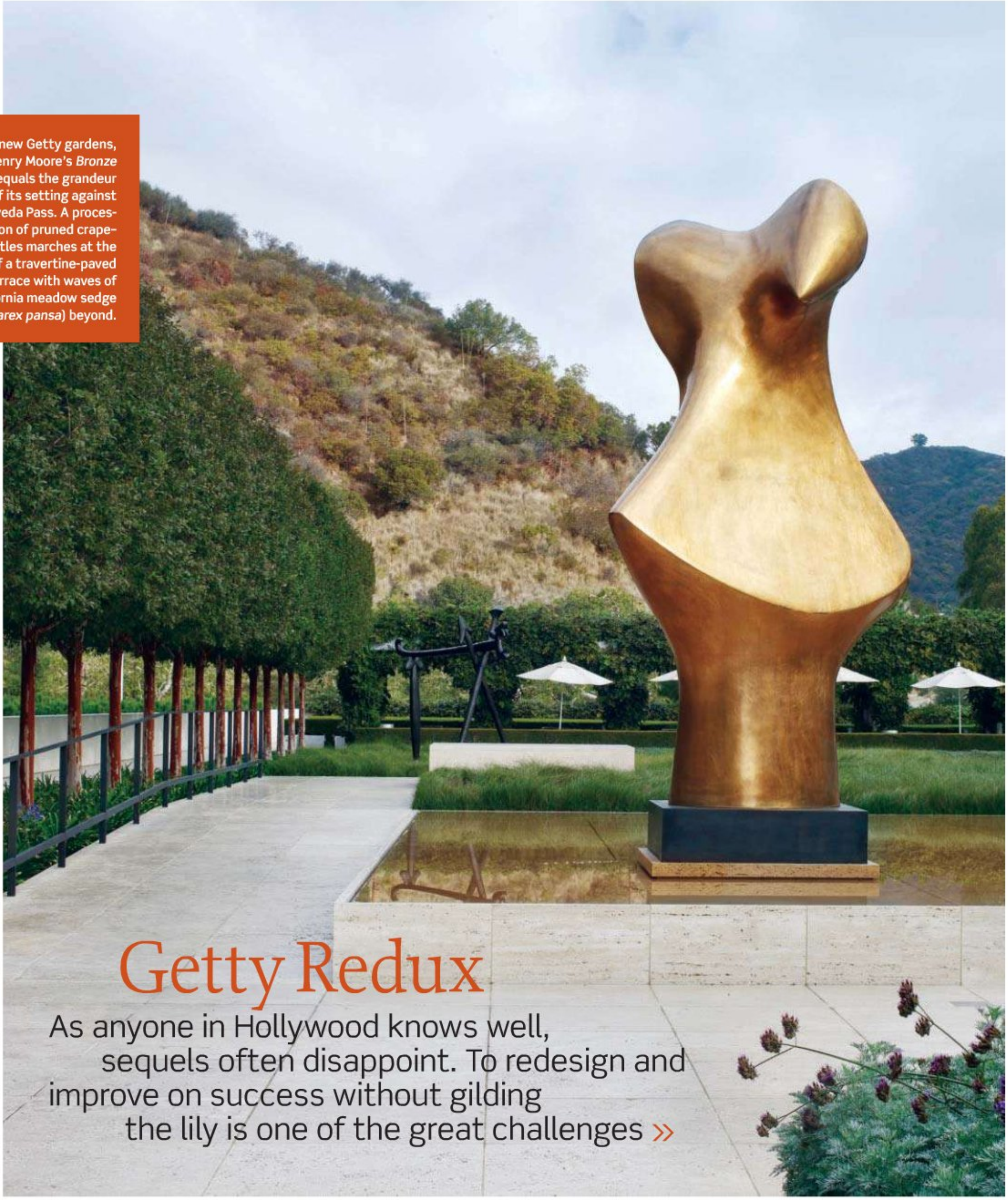
LA Garden Show

Get some tips for your own garden from some of the best landscape designers in Southern California at the 2008 LA Garden Show from May 2-4. Buy one-of-a-kind plants, meet well-known authors and enjoy informative demonstrations throughout the fun-filled weekend.

In 2007, *Garden Design* sponsored the Tiffany-inspired garden presented by designer Heather Lenkin. The 900 square foot boxwood knot garden won first place at the show. Congratulations Heather!



Heather Lenkin
Lenkin Design
www.lenkindesign.com
626-441-6655



At the new Getty gardens, Henry Moore's *Bronze Form* equals the grandeur of its setting against Sepulveda Pass. A procession of pruned crapemyrtles marches at the edge of a travertine-paved terrace with waves of California meadow sedge (*Carex pansa*) beyond.

Getty Redux

As anyone in Hollywood knows well, sequels often disappoint. To redesign and improve on success without gilding the lily is one of the great challenges »

MARION BRENNER



Above: Raised beds are framed with patinated steel; Elizabeth Frink's *Horse* gallops in a cloud of blue fescue spiked with glossy black *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' (bottom). Below: Trellised wisteria shades a picnic area.



in any discipline. So when the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired the 20th-century sculpture collection of benefactors Fran and Ray Stark, and needed a place to show it, the museum wisely returned to Dennis McGlade, a partner at the Olin Partnership and the original designer of the Getty's landscaping, for expertise.

The commission was to enhance the existing landscape in order to create compelling stage sets for the large-scale sculpture works, and the design owes at least a tip of the hat to showbiz.

By way of a collaboration with the Getty's 18-year veteran horticulturist Michael DeHart, the grounds now sing in harmony with a stunning new cast of characters. A brilliant red de Suvero figure, *Gandydancer's Dream*, visually vibrates in a lush green stand of junipers; the glossy rosettes of *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' echo the color of bronze works by Isamu Noguchi, Henry Moore and Elisabeth Frink.

DeHart and colleague Lynne Tjomsland are both veterans of Disney properties, and of Walt Disney's signature storytelling ethic. "We've used plants to draw the eye through, to define rooms by way of color, texture and as a way to emphasize the sculpture," says Tjomsland. For example, *Verbena bonariensis* "bloom a soft curtain of mauve" among gray-white artemisia foliage. See-through gray-blue grasses extend and animate the effect. The LEED-EB-certified site includes drip irrigation and replaces much of the mown lawn with granite paths and California natives.

A new T1 tram station was constructed so visitors could go from the street-level parking facility to the top of the hill where the museum is located. The new gardens, which opened formally in 2007, include a green roof and several other terraces, some travertine-stepped, along the hillside property that includes 150 developed acres on 700 acres of precious Los Angeles real estate.



McGlade, a student of the great Glaswegian Ian McHarg and a graduate of the University of Illinois and University of Pennsylvania, has other projects in the works: a new community in the Cayman Islands featuring tropical gardens, a Richard Meier residential complex in Beverly Hills and a progressive community plan on a reclaimed riverfront "brownfield" location in Napa. For the latter, the idea is to repurpose some of the old industrial artifacts, like reclaimed gantry cranes, says McGlade. There might even be an outdoor movie screen. "Can you imagine viewing *On the Waterfront* there?" asks McGlade with delight. — **TIMOTHY JACK WARD**

The new Getty Gardens are closed on Mondays; for more information call 310-440-7300 or see getty.edu/visit.

MARION BRENNER(3)


THE | WICKER WORKS
Photographer: Stephane Bravin



books

Dynamic Duo

Terence Conran and Diarmuid Gavin team up to explore *Outdoors*

WHAT DO A STYLE GURU/RETAIL MAVEN/RESTAURATEUR and a renegade landscape designer have in common? Answer: A passion for gardens. Expressing surprisingly parallel creative visions in their recent book *Outdoors: The Garden Design Book for the Twenty-First Century* (The Monacelli Press, Fall 2007), Terence Conran and Diarmuid Gavin reveal themselves to be practical dreamers, blending a penchant for chic yet approachable design with a mission to challenge the imagination. Now the central figure in an interconnected group of businesses, Conran burst onto the scene in the 1960s with the creation of the Habitat stores, which brought high style to the masses. Gavin's garden designs, while shocking enough to reduce him to living hand to mouth in his early days, kept the average homeowner with a small yard in mind and stretched the possibilities of how to utilize limited space. Both designers are rebels in their own rights, but both at their core are grounded in reality — a combination mirrored in *Outdoors*. Coupling inspiring photos with clear advice on everything from lighting to fences to plant selection, *Outdoors* takes a creative look at every garden type — small and large; rooftop, rural and suburban; for entertaining, meditation, work, child's play and growing vegetables — proving that anyone, no matter their space, can enjoy their garden in style. — **JENNY ANDREWS**



Conran and Gavin cover every aspect of gardening in their new book, from tightly controlled, high-impact simplicity (Gourdon in Provence, above), to informal chic like the timber-and-slate path beneath a vine-covered pergola (right).

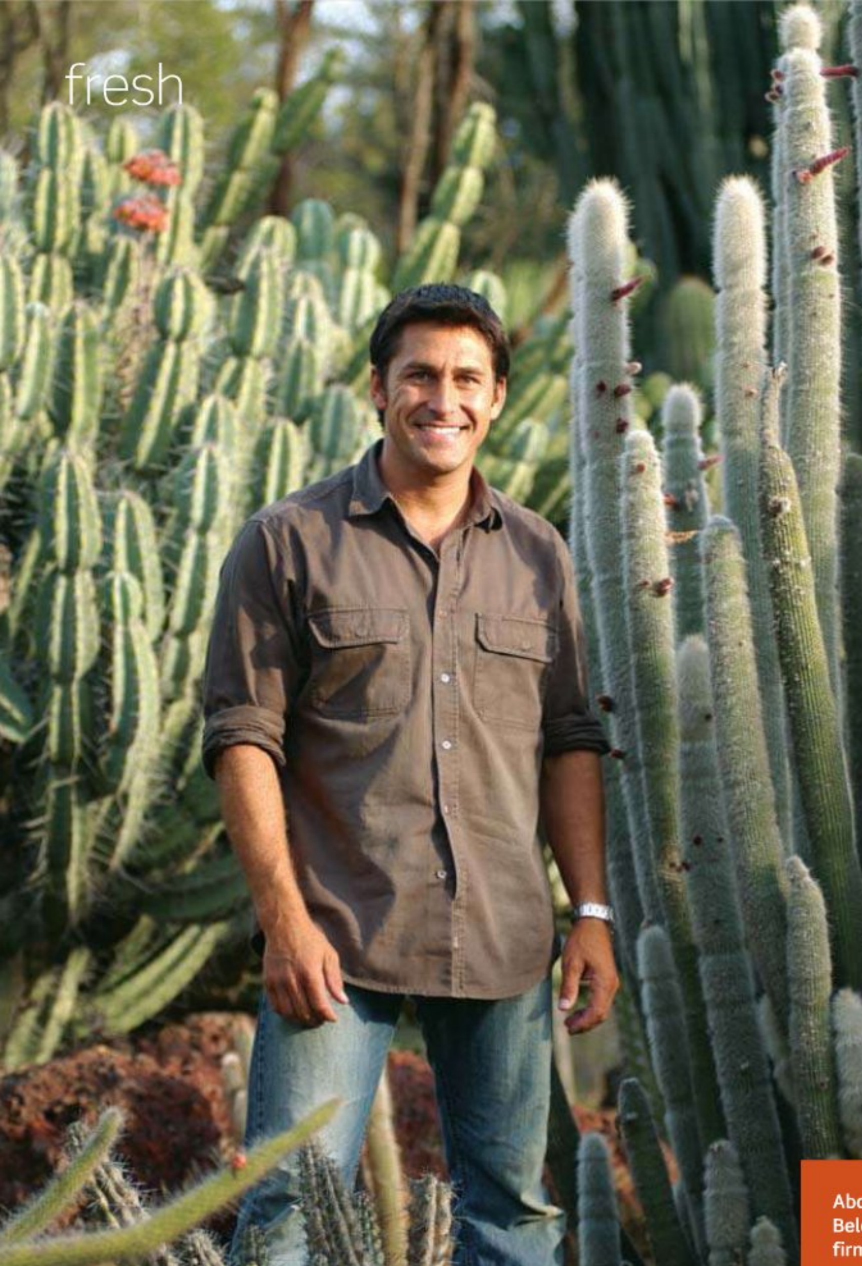
LEFT: COURTESY THE MONACELLI PRESS; RIGHT: COURTESY SIXINCH

furniture

Sixinch Chair

Debuting in the United States at New York's International Contemporary Furniture Fair last spring, the coated foam S3 chair was meant to be "a light and funny design," says its designer Pieter Jamart, a founder of Belgium's Sixinch. Multifunctional, it is a joyful addition to an adult or children's room, and has a rain drain for outdoor use. In black, yellow, white, green, red and orange, this piece is available in the United States through Jason Champion Outdoor. Call 941-957-3200 or see jasonchampionoutdoor.com.





one to watch

Just Landed: Jamie Durie

JAMIE DURIE'S GARDENS ARE AUSTRALIAN FAVORITES for their bold, contemporary style, sensitivity to the environment and attention to form and function. Seasoned by his lifestyle shows *Backyard Blitz* and *Renovation Rescue* — huge hits on the southern continent — Jamie is now the new host of *The Victory Garden* on PBS, where he has expanded his audience of admirers. Even better, Jamie will be the new green design columnist for *Garden Design* beginning this spring.

GD: *How did you land at* The Victory Garden*?*

JD: When the host position was offered to me, I couldn't refuse. *The Victory Garden* is America's most respected and longest-running garden show — how could I say no?

GD: *How will the show change with you as the host?*

JD: I'm currently designing gardens in 11 different countries, and as a result I'm constantly exposed to different design techniques and varieties of flowers and plants. I'll bring that sensibility to the show. We won't be staying in one backyard — we'll be filming in gardens all over the place. The gardens will be more livable and interactive — not just places to look at.

GD: *I notice that the show — for example, the segment on recycling rainwater — addresses landscape decisions that respond to an environmental context. Will green design become an integral part of the thinking here in the United States?*

JD: Environmental awareness has become fashionable of late because of the exposure Al Gore has given it, but it is more than just a trend. I'm one of Gore's 250 climate project presenters in Australia, so I'll be doing 10 seminars a year on the topic.

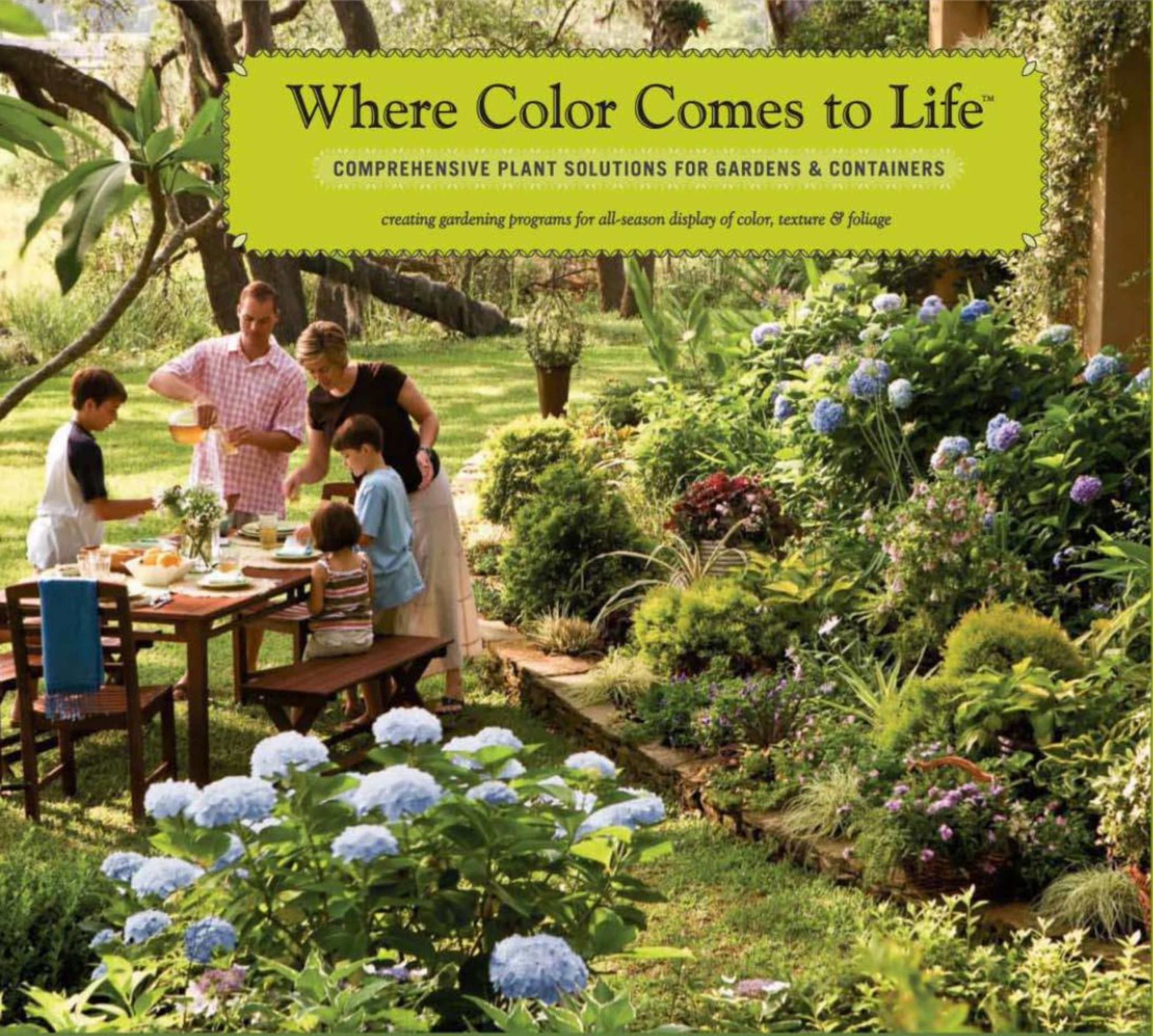
GD: *Any chance you'll be moving stateside permanently?*

JD: I'm open. Australia will always be my home, and it would be hard to pull me away from my garden and the beaches. But I'm incredibly intrigued with the United States. In Australia, people tend to focus on New York City and L.A. as great American places. But recently I went to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, took a train ride through Cape Cod and flew across the Grand Canyon. The natural beauty of this country blows me away. I'm hungry to learn more about the native plants and animals here.



Above: Jamie Durie. Below: Durie's design firm PATIO Landscape Architecture & Design created this Melbourne garden predominantly of natives that bear the brunt of midday sun.

TOP TO BOTTOM: ANN JOHANSSEN; SIMON KENNY


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Mini Delights

As intricately beautiful as jewelry and so varied that you could acquire one a day and never possess them all, miniature orchids are the latest addiction

SOME ARE SO TINY THAT THEY FIT IN A THIMBLE, AND NONE STANDS OVER SEVEN INCHES tall. For someone like myself with a passion for orchids but little space, these small plants with their proportionate blooms are the perfect solution. You can easily fit 25 on a windowsill and hundreds in a space the size of your average bedroom closet. Though miniature orchids can be found just about anywhere in the world, it is in the spongy wet cloud forests of the tropics that they reach their fullest expression. Here they root to the tiniest twigs and thrive on a diet of rain and mist.

—**WILLIAM CULLINA,** AUTHOR OF *UNDERSTANDING ORCHIDS: AN UNCOMPLICATED GUIDE TO GROWING THE WORLD'S MOST EXOTIC PLANTS* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN, 2004)



***ONCIDIUM* TWINKLE 'RED FANTASY'** This popular, free-blooming, easy hybrid of the bird's beak orchid (notice the little bird in each dime-size bloom), 'Red Fantasy' has intensely fragrant winter blooms. A good plant for a bright windowsill. Optimum temperature range: 55 to 65 degrees.

Appeal: Perhaps even more than their larger cousins, miniature orchids come in seemingly limitless shapes, sizes and colors. Some look like diminutive corsage orchids, while others resemble tasseled handbags, swans in flight, mushrooms, bees or abstract sculpture. Many bloom nearly year-round, and though some will thrive on a sunny windowsill, many others will be content under fluorescent plant lights.

Zones: Some small orchids grow as far north as the arctic tundra, but their diversity increases exponentially as one approaches the equator. Except for *Encyclia tampensis* (Zone 10), the varieties shown here are tropical and can be grown outdoors only in Zones 12 to 13.

Exposure: Orchids flower best in bright light, like a south- or east-facing window,

LEFT: ANDRE BARANOWSKI; RIGHT: CHELSEA STICKEL



BULBOPHYLLUM (CIRRHOPETALUM) PICTURATUM Each 2.5-inch-long flower of this Southeast Asian species reminds me of a pelican with its beak open wide in a dive for food. The elaborate tassels are there to attract small flies that pollinate the blooms. It is fairly easy to grow on a small branch, where it happily creeps about. Optimum temperature range: 55 to 60 degrees.









or two 40-watt florescent lights left on for 12 to 16 hours a day. In a greenhouse or outdoors in summer, light shade is needed.

Soil: Miniatures can be grown in various orchid mixes. I prefer a blend of gravel and fine fir bark or a loose wad of New Zealand sphagnum moss. Or mount them on small, soft-barked branches.

Care: The best choice for a windowsill are miniatures with succulent leaves or stems, which tolerate drier winter air. Cloud forest species lack a "camel's hump," and require the higher humidity of a greenhouse or Wardian case, similar to a terrarium. Succulent types should be watered when the roots and potting medium are nearly dry; those with thinner leaves should be watered one to four times a week plus a few mistings. Not heavy feeders, liquid houseplant fertilizer at quarter-strength, applied once every week or two, will suffice.

[1] ***PLEUROTHALLIS TRUNCATA*** A cloud forest species that makes up in vibrancy what it lacks in size,this delicate beauty blooms for months during the cooler parts of the year. Two- to three-inch chains of oval, bright orange flowers each only an eighth of an inch in diameter dangle like costume jewelry atop heart-shaped leaves. Happy at temperatures between 55 and 85 degrees, it is an easy species to cultivate under fluorescent lights.

[2] ***ASCOCENDA* SWEET CHERRY 'MEECHAI'** Orchids are remarkably easy to hybridize, and many miniature varieties are crosses between a small species and a much larger one. Ascocendas are the product of just such a union. Compact and brilliantly colored, they demand warmth (above 65 degrees) and very bright light to bloom properly. A well-grown specimen stands six to 10 inches tall, though it may grow taller. The vivid blooms are each nearly two inches in diameter and up to 20 open simultaneously on each six-inch spike. Because of their large roots, ascocendas are often grown in open baskets.

[3] ***MASDEVALLIA* ANGEL CANDY** Colorful *Masdevallia* hybrids are good introductions to this genus. They are generally more adaptable and vigorous than the wild species, and with over 300 wild species known and more being found all the time, the potential hybrid combinations are almost limitless. Though often described as a cool-growing genus (preferring temperatures between 50 and 75 degrees), many can thrive at more intermediate temperatures, to 85 degrees.

[4] ***SOPHRONITIS COCCINEA*** So popular in its native Brazil that some hobbyists specialize in it exclusively, brilliant red *Sophronitis coccinea* is often used as a parent to produce bold, floriferous and compact mini *Cattleya* hybrids that thrive in a sunny window or under lights. Optimum temperature range: 55 to 60 degrees.

LEFT: ANDRE BARANOWSKI (3). CHELSEA STICKEL; RIGHT: CHELSEA STICKEL

DESIGNING WITH MINIATURE ORCHIDS: ☐ Take advantage of their diminutive size and pot miniatures in small, unusual containers (make sure they have drainage holes), or mount them on bark or mossy twigs. ☐ A well-landscaped Wardian case is a cloud forest in miniature, with orchids, ferns, mosses and even tree frogs. Complete with artificial lights, high-end models are elegant pieces of furniture that can be placed anywhere in the home. ☐ In most parts of the United States and southern Canada, orchids can benefit from a summer outdoors (as long as night temperatures remain in the mid-50s or higher). Wind and water keep dust and dissolved salts at bay, and there is nothing like a good soaking rain to rehydrate a parched specimen. A wire or lath structure can provide shade and a place to hang your collection.



ENCYCLIA TAMPENSIS One of Florida's most common epiphytic orchids, this charming, medium-size species can be found as far north as Orlando (Zones 10-12). In colder areas, the butterfly orchid is easy to cultivate on a sunny windowsill, especially if it can spend the summer out of doors.


1

[1] **CLEAR BLUE:** Brown Jordan's striking new Monaco chair evokes sailing or windsurfing, and is a clear departure from traditional styling. In sunlight its featherlight extruded aluminum frame is revealed through translucent, woven resin cord. $1,870. Call 800-743-4252 or see brownjordan.com.

[2] **DOT MATRIX:** Dappled shadows from foliage are suggested by cutouts on JANUS et Cie's bronze-finished sculptural garden chair called Loner. Bikini-clad bottoms may be in for a surprise, but it's a small price to pay for high style. $1,297. Call 800-245-2687 or see janusetcie.com.

[3] **DOILY TOP:** Designer Patricia Urquiola challenged Italian maker Kartell to create her futuristic plastic side table, called T-table. Urquiola describes it as embroidery-like and feminine, sparkling in the sunlight. $239. Call 866-854-8823 or see kartell.it.


2

New Peekaboo

Fresh and provocative garden furniture that sheds some light on the art of blending in


3

SEE-THROUGH PLANTS LIKE WIRY-STEMMED *VERBENA BONARIENSIS* reveal color, light and texture in the garden. There's a new peekaboo in garden furnishings, too: translucent materials, delicate forms and cut-out doily surfaces that become elements in the garden's composition instead of blocking the view.

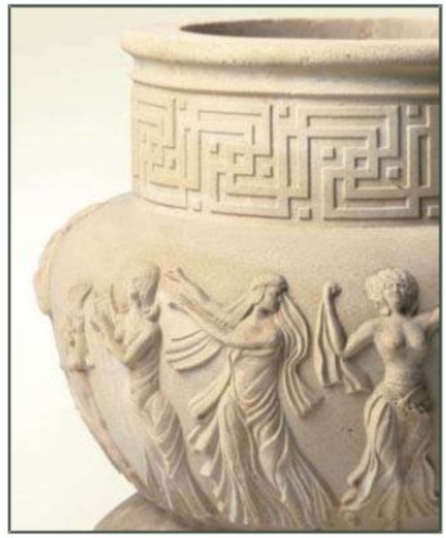
Rising-star designer Andrea Knecht's new translucent side chair is an abstraction of a screen porch. In September at Chicago's International Casual Furniture & Accessories Market, Brown Jordan, JANUS et Cie and Maku introduced jazzy riffs on themes of translucency, lightness and open space. Their new pieces utilize innovative materials like extruded resin, ultralight extruded aluminum and perforated metal. Johnny West, a mellow Cali surfer who created Maku to kill time waiting for big waves in Indonesia, also provides jobs and education for families in Java. West sports a deep tan, flip-flops and a tattoo on his arm that symbolizes the words "dedicated to everlasting family love" — not unlike his debut chairs, which feature arms that reveal carved decorations. — **TIMOTHY JACK WARD**



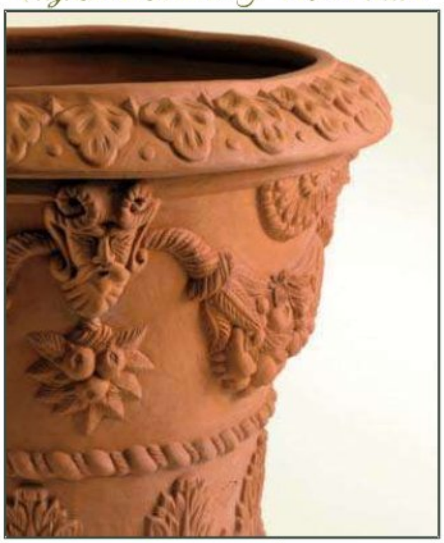
English Ashmore & Vase Plinth



French Anduze



Fete Champetre

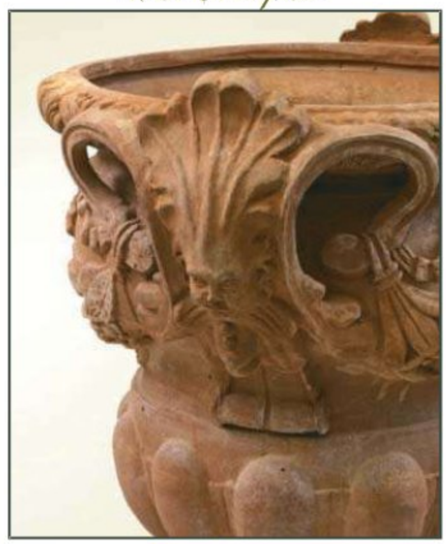


Whichford Swag

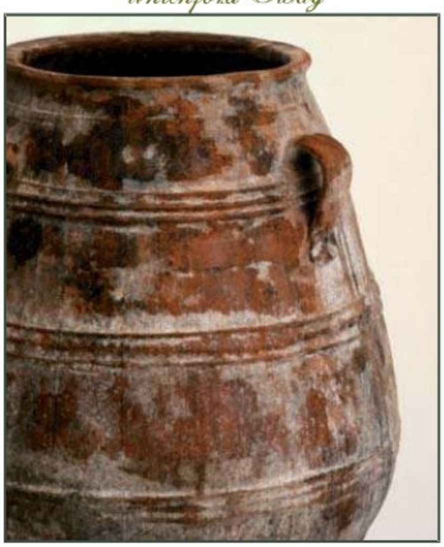
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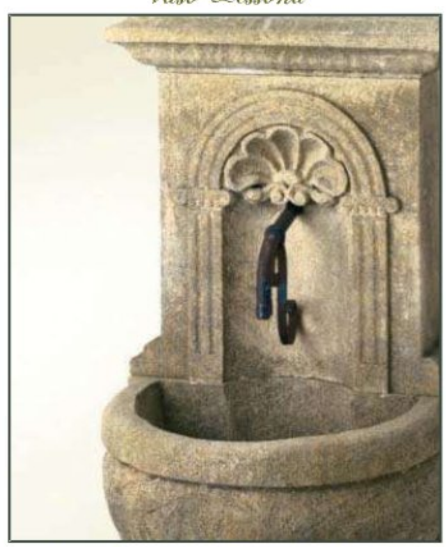
Vaso Lessona



Greek Amphora



Oriental Pacific Glazed Pot



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4


5

[5] SCREEN PORCH: Swiss-Brazilian designer Andrea Knecht, known as Tete, has won critical acclaim for her conceptual and inventive designs. She says her Sissi chair "plays with heavy and light" with its blocky iconic form and "veil" of woven rattan. She plans to show it at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan in April. See blifase.it.


6


7


8

[4] FUTURE-SHAPED: Daniel Rode's futuristic Macrame chair bends the potential of computer-assisted design. The prototype chair won a 2006 Promosedia design award, and is now in production. See psmdesign.it.

[6] BASKET WEAVING: It may be a long way from London to Grafton, Wisconsin, but Andy Morter's wicker lamps with translucent diffusers, called Mambajamba, clearly invoke the cigar-shaped form of Sir Norman Foster's Swiss Re tower. From $169 to $729. Call 800-343-1954 or see shadyladylighting.com.

[7] OPEN ARMS: Carlsbad, California-based Maku's limited-edition lounge chair, is a fresh take on ubiquitous teak garden furniture. Frangipani blossom carvings are found inside the arms. Built of sustainably harvested and salvaged wood in Java by workers who benefit from Maku-provided education and family support. $1,499. Call 760-930-0081 or see makufurniture.com.

[8] WHOLLY HOLLOW: Domila's Denver armchair has a Sputnik 1950's vibe, with an open, boomerang silhouette and aluminum pod feet. Handmade in Brazil of cumaru hardwood. $2,550. Call 866-359-0085 or see domila.com.









White Hot

A sculptural, minimalist approach defines Belgian contemporary chic



THE POWER OF A CRISP, MODERN OUTDOOR LIVing space to enrich a home with minimal fuss and maximum style is beautifully demonstrated here by Belgian landscape architect Kristof Swinnen, a leader of Belgium's avant-garde.

His clients are retirees who enjoy travel and when home frequently host their family, friends and young grandchildren in this gracious but modest, compact suburban house in the heart of East Flanders. Because they are passionate about their garden, but not about gardening, Swinnen enlarged the sense of space by opening the view to the landscape just beyond and chose hardy, low-maintenance but high-impact architectural plantings.

FORM: To transform this backyard, just 98 by 125 feet, into a dramatic and tranquil oasis, Swinnen designed a clustered compound of private spaces, with weightless-looking terraces that seem to hover over quiet reflecting pools. Linear, ordered hedges individuate spaces while creating shadows and shelter.

STRUCTURE: The new garden walls, partitions and pools were constructed of red bricks in keeping with the materials used for the existing 40-year-old suburban house. After the structures were completed, Swinnen glazed the house with a paint color that





Left: Painted masonry walls and tiers planted with boxwood organize the framework of the upper dining terrace, garden and pool. Alias table and chairs (aliasusa.com). Right: Serene "floating" water terraces offer solitude and views of the landscape. Paola Lenti chaise (paolalenti.com).



MINIMAL FURNITURE

Swinnen chose clean, white and sculptural furniture like this Paola Lenti chaise to perfectly match the planes, proportion and feel of the outdoor living space. The see-through effect of the furnishings melds with the spare, minimalist garden.

WATER POWER

Mirrorlike planes of water also act as sculptural elements in Swinnen's backyard oasis. Inhabited by koi, and planted with water iris, the pools are just 12 inches deep, a safety feature for a client with young, and naturally curious, grandchildren.

PAINTED ELEGANCE

Although constructed entirely of red masonry like the house itself, all the outdoor surfaces were painted crisp ice white and dove gray. As a result, the planes of cool color and texture draw the eye to the overall, sculpted environment.

CONCRETE DETAILS

Twin "morning" and "evening" terraces appear to float over the shimmering pools, and are modestly constructed of white concrete panels in a graphic grid of 31.5-inch squares. The design suggests grander materials such as limestone.



Above: Dramatically uplighted plantings glow in evening light and mirror the geometry of garden architecture. Opposite: A collecting basin "pond," planted with dwarf cattails (*Typha minima*), is the source of freshly filtered water for the garden.



"I like strong lines and good balance between greens, terraces, wall heights, and the surfaces of water and lawn."
—KRISTOF SWINNEN



is barely off-white gray and swathed the outdoor structures in a crisp snow white. The result is polished-looking, the house and its garden taking on the appearance of a unified sculpture, as though they are carved from ice.

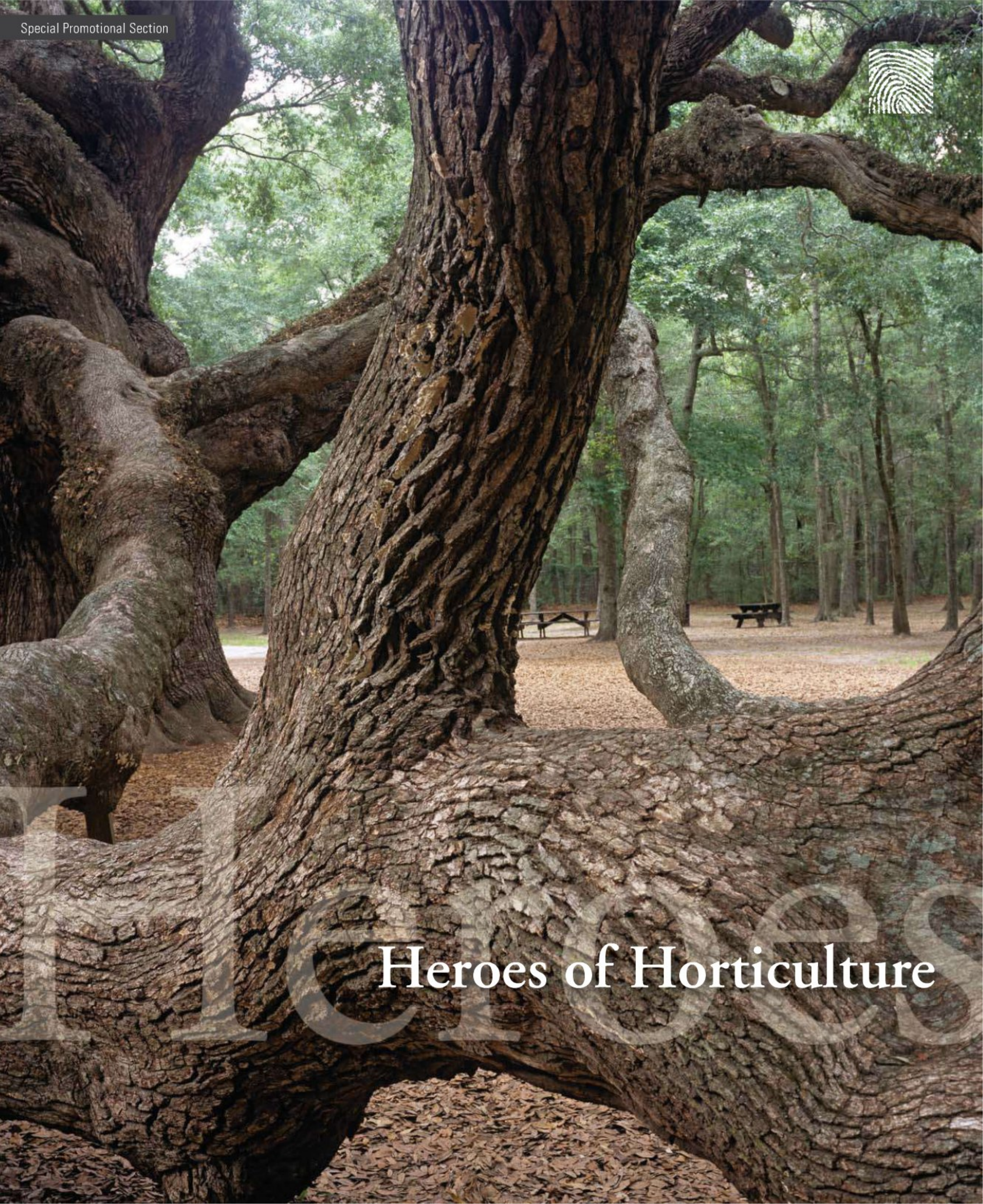
WATER: Water itself is among the strongest design elements in Swinnen's garden. It is cooling and acoustically calming, but the pools are also visually critical to the composition. They provide mirrorlike surfaces that amplify the planes of the sculpture and create private rooms, while paradoxically preserving open space on the relatively compact site. Says Swinnen, "The water is a soft transition between the house and the landscape."

PLANTS: The reflecting pools are inhabited by fish and planted simply with Japanese water iris (*Iris laevigata*). The naturally sand-filtered water collects in a pool on the east side of the house, then flows freely around the terraces and plants. Eventually, the plantings of European hornbeams that flank the shallow swimming pool will be pruned into hedges. Likewise, when more mature, the graphic rows of *Acer campestre* — a maple native to Europe — will be cut into Swinnen-signature sculptured "blocks" to delineate property lines and create privacy screens.

VIEW: "I find it important that a garden provide several places to sit," says Swinnen, and in a relatively small overall plan, he has done exactly that. His site-specific terraces are situated according to the time of day, to optimize the mood and the view in different lights — morning, afternoon and sunset.

FURNISHINGS: Swinnen furnished the garden with chaises that are themselves sculptural elements, visually equal to the other features in the minimalist garden. Flowing modernist forms, such as a Paola Lenti chaise that appears to be made of one ribbonlike plane of upholstery, were clearly chosen because they're in exact proportion to the garden walls. On the terrace, a setting of dining table and chairs by the Italian manufacturer Alias provides a bridge between house and garden. And a comfortable place to sit! Swinnen's wife operates Swinnen-Fillaud, a trendsetting indoor/outdoor shop that operates in conjunction with the designer's office in Sint-Niklaas.

BONUS: With doors and windows open to the fresh air in warm weather, the house "feels like living on the water," says Swinnen — quite an accomplishment in the flatlands of the suburban Belgian countryside, in a climate similar to that of New York. *For more information e-mail info@swinnen kristof.com or call 011-32-3710-11-51.*



Heroes of Horticulture

The Cultural Landscape Foundation's

2007 Landslide *Heroes of Horticulture*

The formal and vernacular trees and plantings that surround us everyday are living reminders of our country's heritage. Often associated with historically important people and events, the horticultural components of our landscapes have shaped the development of communities and cultures. These horticultural wonders console and inspire us, and as such, stand as living witnesses – connecting the people, achievements, and events of our past to the present and future. The power of these natural, planted elements thus deserves the same respect and appreciation bequeathed upon the creativity of noted artists, poets, and scholars.

To honor and help preserve our country's horticultural heritage, the 2007 Landslide theme, *Heroes of Horticulture*, highlights significant horticultural features that have influenced our cultural identity and stood steadfast in the face of, at times, insurmountable natural and cultural odds.

For the second consecutive year, the Cultural Landscape Foundation is pleased to partner with *Garden Design* in selecting and publicizing the Landslide honorees. Joining this collaborative effort, George Eastman House Museum of International Photography and Film in Rochester, New York, commissioned and curated a collection of photographs of the 2007 Landslide *Heroes* that is currently on exhibit and traveling thereafter. The images shown here are among those included in that exhibition, which is on display at the Eastman through March 2, 2008.



Photo © Roger Bruce



Photo © Matthew Keefe

Bur Oak Tree

Quercus macrocarpa Michaux
Henry Ford Estate, Fair Lane
Dearborn, Michigan

The Bur Oak on the Henry Ford Estate is likely more than 300 years old and stands as a witness to the sweeping changes that have occurred on the site. The tree became the center of the estate's vegetable garden during the Ford family tenure, and though the garden has long since vanished, the oak remains. For today's visitor, the tree has become an essential link to the region's past, to learn about pre-and early-settlement land use as well as the Ford's enjoyment of the site and Jensen's integration of the existing tree into his design. Though the species is native to Michigan, there are relatively few remaining bur oaks of this age in the region. The tree, severely damaged by lightening strikes over the years, has become a powerful symbol of survival.

Previous page: Angel Southern Live Oak Tree, Angel Oak Park, Johns Island, Charleston, South Carolina. Photo © Eric Baden

Learn more about the *Heroes of Horticulture*
www.tclf.org/landslide/2007



Photo © Jodean Bifoss

Glendora Bougainvillea

Bougainvillea spectabilis & Bougainvillea glabra
Glendora, California

The vines of the Glendora Bougainvillea, which were planted at the turn of the century, cover the lower portion of twenty-five, ninety-foot tall palm trees and comprise the largest growth of bougainvillea in the United States. The plantings originally bordered two sides of an orange grove likely planted circa 1890. Such a display of tropical plants helped further the image of California as a paradise and was common to citrus ranches throughout the state from 1895 to 1940. While California's early citrus industry has all but vanished, the Glendora Bougainvillea remain as a living emblem of that era.



Photo © John Pfahl

Rhododendron Collection

Greendale Cemetery
Meadville, Pennsylvania

In 1852, a group of Meadville's citizens founded the Greendale Cemetery as a public park and cemetery. The site was selected to take advantage of the panoramic view of French Creek, creating a burial place of quiet dignity and beauty. In 1977, American Nurseryman magazine cited the cemetery's collection of plantings, including its rhododendrons, as outstanding specimens. Today, the cemetery spreads over 200 acres and is the home to more than 1,500 rhododendrons, the largest of which are 125 years old and stand up to 35 feet tall.

2007 List of Heroes

American Sycamore Tree
Antietam National Battlefield, Sharpsburg, Maryland

Azalea Collection
Airlie Gardens, Wilmington, North Carolina

Baldcypress Grove
Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio

Bamboo Groves
Jungle Gardens, Avery Island, Louisiana

Banyan Tree Allée
Banyan Street, Boca Grande, Florida

Camellia Collection
Magnolia Plantation, Charleston, S. Carolina

Desert Ironwood Tree
Arizona-Sonora Museum, Tucson, Arizona

Elms of the National Mall
Washington, D.C.

Eucalyptus Tree
Washington Park Arboretum, Seattle, Washington

Glendora Bougainvillea
Glendora, California

Horse Chestnut Tree
Susan B. Anthony House, Rochester, New York

Live Oak Tree Allée
Main Street, Houston, Texas

Moreton Bay Fig Trees
Rancho Los Alamitos, Long Beach, California

Pear Trees
Ellwanger Garden, Rochester, New York

Pow-Wow Bigleaf Maple Tree
Gladstone, Oregon

Rhododendron Collection
Greendale Cemetery, Meadville, Pennsylvania

Tree Peony Collection
Linwood Gardens, Pavilion, New York

- A Society of Royal Oaks -

Angel Southern Live Oak Tree
Johns Island, South Carolina

Bur Oak Tree
Henry Ford Estate, Fair Lane, Dearborn, Michigan

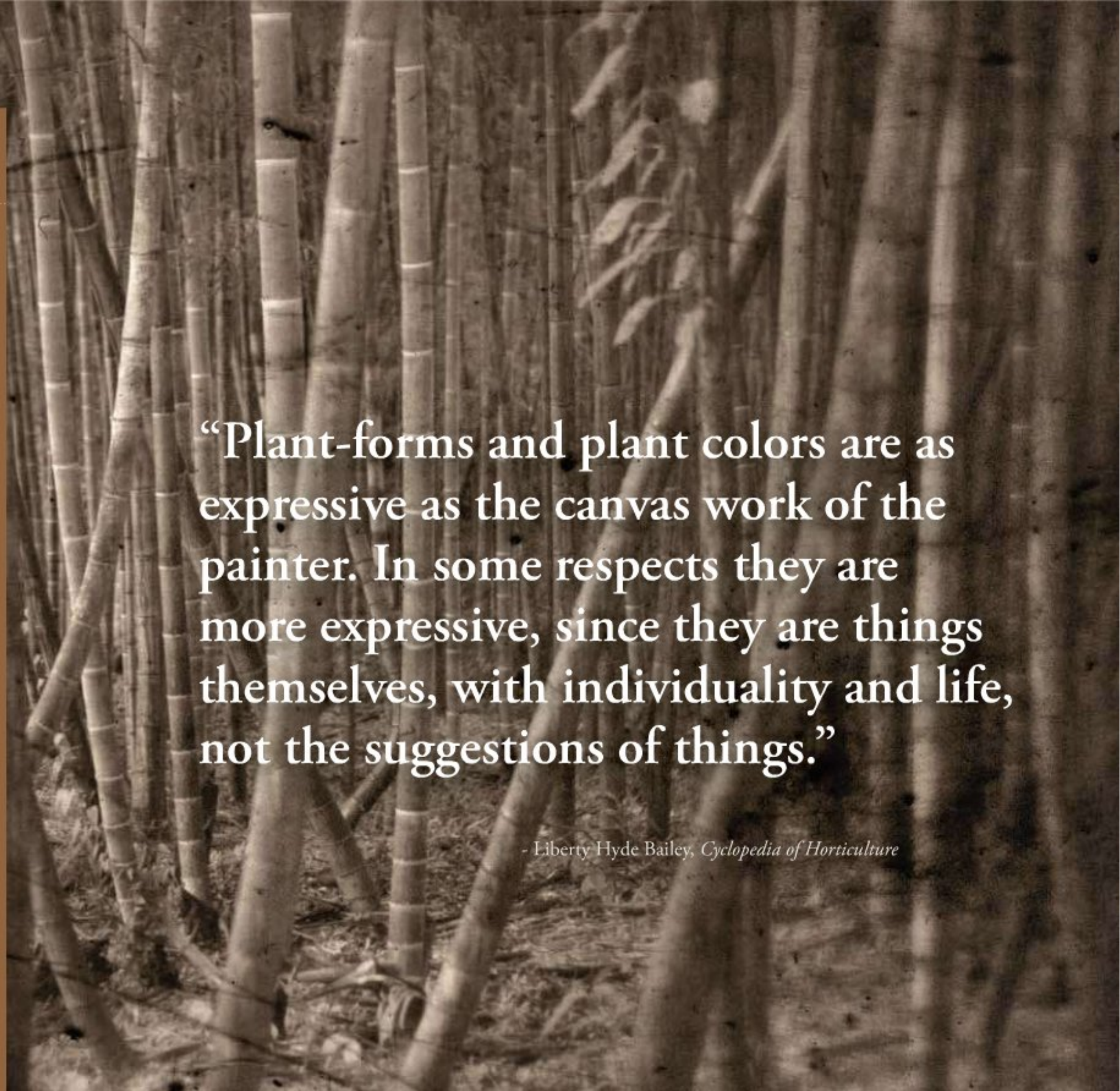
Cork Oak Tree
Santa Cruz, California

Southern Live Oak Tree
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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GARDEN DESIGN

GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE International Museum of Photography and Film



"Plant-forms and plant colors are as expressive as the canvas work of the painter. In some respects they are more expressive, since they are things themselves, with individuality and life, not the suggestions of things."

- Liberty Hyde Bailey, *Cyclopedia of Horticulture*

Photo © Louviere+Vanessa



Photo © Louviere+Vanessa

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

Heroes of Horticulture

George Eastman House
December 1, 2007 - March 2, 2008

learn more at www.tclf.org/landslide/2007



2008 LANDSLIDE CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Marvels of Modernism

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Deadline for applications is April 30, 2008.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation
Established in 1998, is the only not-for-profit foundation in America dedicated to increasing the public's awareness of the important legacy of cultural landscapes and to helping save them for the future. Learn more at www.tclf.org



Magical Madeira

Despite its isolation, this island is rich in plants from all over the world



Top: Among the many lush sites to visit on the island of Madeira, Reid's Palace hotel is graced with 10 acres of gardens. Right: Blue and white agapanthus line a path at Palheiro Gardens.

TOP TO BOTTOM: ORIENT-EXPRESS HOTELS (UK) LTD.; COURTESY PORTUGUESE NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE

WELCOME TO MADEIRA. WHERE? WE'VE ALL HEARD of the wine, but pinpointing the place isn't easy. A remote island off the coast of Portugal some 600 miles from Lisbon, it sits like a crumb of volcanic rock in the middle of the vast, gusty Atlantic Ocean. But while its position may look lonely, Madeira is stationed at the crossroads of several major trade routes and for centuries has been a busy port for all the great European seafaring nations — Portugal, England and Spain.

The capital Funchal has all the coffee-drinking, football-watching, fishing and lace-making hallmarks of a traditional Mediterranean port, with historic buildings dating back to the 1500s and churches filled


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with fine Flemish paintings. The green and mountainous interior of Madeira is extraordinarily fertile, and thanks to intact swaths of original laurisilva forest, it includes a UNESCO World Heritage site. Native Madeiran plants are at a premium, squeezed out by plants that blew in on the trading ships from all four corners of the globe, and in the mild, year-round, subtropical climate (similar in feel to San Francisco), there was scarcely one import that didn't make itself at home. African tulip trees line the streets of old Funchal. Pineapples, hydrangeas, orchids and agaves nudge each other for space in the gardens. Other exotics simply went native: *Agapanthus* lines the roadsides; ginger lilies follow the watery cascades from the mountains.

The British, ever the dedicated gardeners, appreciated Madeira's botanical potential early on. They still flock to the flower festival in spring, enjoy orchids in February and camellias in March and April, and even pack the hotels at Christmas to see the aloes and jacarandas. Now U.S. visitors are also arriving in numbers, thanks largely to the availability of flights (see sidebar, page 43).

Reid's Palace Hotel Gardens

Reid's Palace, the legendary Raffles-style hotel set on cliffs overlooking Funchal, offers all the old-fashioned charms of an Edwardian luxury getaway, plus, following its recent refit, a spa suited for the modern oligarch. If you stay at Reid's, as I was lucky enough to do, the 10 lush acres of gardens are yours to wander. Towering palms, dragon trees and monkey puzzles, many dating back to the 1890s when the hotel was built, form a high canopy that filters the sunlight and calms the sea breezes, making the winding pebble paths a mellow stroll through collections of succulents, tangled forests of climbers such as *Thunbergia, Bougainvillea* and wisteria, and a tremendous range of plants from all over the world that claim the spotlight at different times of year. To see their familiar parlor plants gone wild in this balmy climate must have been a breath of fantasy for Edwardian guests, and a whiff of botanical hedonism still hangs like a charm over the gardens. The junglelike hush is broken only by the clinking of tea cups from the black-and-white-tiled terrace where Winston Churchill once posed for a photograph and sketched the harbor view below him. (See reidspalace.com.)

Monte Palace Tropical Garden

This estate in the mountain town of Monte, north of Funchal, is almost Bavarian in its theatricality. High on the slopes, a cable car from Funchal takes you to the gate. The estate passed through British and Portuguese hands, and in a former life the chateaulike house was a grand hotel, now closed. The beautifully kept gardens are the main attraction. Spread over a wide but steep-sided gorge laced with winding paths and hidden grottos, they funnel down into a central lake and terraced area. The garden claims the largest collection of cycads in the world, numerous palms, azaleas, tree ferns, orchids and begonias, and an area dedicated to the native laurisilva forest, which lends an idea of how the island looked before it was settled. Red bridges give parts of the garden a Chinese flavor, although eclectic groupings of marble architectural elements and stone seating keep the overall look more than a little eccentric. (See montepalace.com.)

Palheiro Gardens

Acknowledged to be among the best gardens to visit, this serene estate was first owned by a Portuguese aristocratic family who hired French landscape designers to lay out the formal features, including avenues of London plane trees and a kilometer-long row of camellias (best visited in March and April). In 1885 the Blandy family, British wine merchants, bought the estate. The current generation continues to garden, and the place has the romantic and slightly disheveled charm of the English garden abroad, as if sun and wine has loosened the corsets of the borders, allowing bright colors and native pizzazz to charm their way in. Colorful *Brugmansia*, bright tropical bedding dahlias, wobbly *Muhlenbeckia* topiaries and swags of roses are all a little less proper than they would be at home, and the result is a welcoming, slightly tipsy garden. (See madeira-gardens.com.)

Madeira Botanical Garden

Created in 1960 from an estate formerly owned by the Reid family, the Botanical Garden sits high up in the natural amphitheater that forms the bay of Funchal and has wonderful views over town and harbor. It features a large collection of native Madeiran plants, many of which are well-known to gardeners but threatened in the wild, such as *Geranium maderense*. In addition to many palms and orchids, and a collection of medicinal plants, it has formal features, such as a parterre picked out in red and green, and a delightfully eccentric topiary garden, as well as forests of South American succulents and cacti that thrive in the spring temperatures. (See madeirabotanicalgarden.com.)

Madeira Magic

The gardens at this science and art center are well worth a visit. Designed by Portugal-based English landscape architect Gerald Luckhurst, they introduce the history of the island's landscape, with all the plants found on Madeira grouped together by region — Japan, Europe, and so on. Australian plants occupy the seaward side of the garden, being very tolerant of salt spray and exposure, and *Phormium*, *Callistemon*, *Hebe*, *Grevillea* and Norfolk Island pines make a subtle contrast to the more common subtropical gardens found elsewhere. (See madeira-magic.com.) — **JOANNA FORTNAM**

GARDEN-OBSESSED TRAVELER

City parks: The grand street leading west out of Funchal, Avenida do Infante, is lined with public gardens that feature bright Victorian-style subtropical bedding. Don't miss the wonderful dragon trees (an almost extinct Madeira native) at the Hospício da Princesa Dona Maria Amélia or the chance to peek into the president's official residence, Quinta Vigia. **Street life:** The black and white mosaic pavements of old Funchal are the forerunner of Roberto Burle Marx's famous Copacabana promenade. Sit outside the Café Teatro on Avenida Arriaga, opposite the small city park, and watch the world go by. **Hotel landscapes:** Brazil's great architect Oscar Niemeyer designed the Pestana Casino Park hotel, complete with a futuristic casino building beamed in direct from Brasilia. Walk through reception and out to the pool to experience his modernist magic. English landscape architect Gerald Luckhurst has designed many hotel landscapes (see gerald.luckhurst.googlepages.com). Suggested: The Pestana Miramar Hotel (opposite Reid's Palace) has dreamy hanging gardens. The Pestana Grand has an excellent succulent garden. (See pestana.com.) **Nature walks:** A network of hand-dug channels called *levadas* distribute water from the mountains around the terraced fields. Walking the levadas is a great way to see the island. Maps and guided tours available from any tourist information point or hotels. **Architecture:** For contemporary architecture that has created a world-wide buzz, visit Casa das Mudas, an arts center at the beach resort of Calheta with a roof garden. Much discussed on architectural websites (like archidose.org/books/mudas.html), it doesn't yet appear to have its own website. **Flights:** TAP, the Portuguese airline, flies from Newark, New Jersey, to Lisbon or Porto, where you can pick up a connecting flight to Funchal. (See tapportugal.com.) From Boston you can fly via the Azores to Funchal, courtesy of Azores Express SATA. (See azores-express.com.)



Grün Garten

The American prairie translates perfectly to a sustainable German garden on the Rhine

"PRAIRIE" SEEMS TO BE THE LATEST BUZZWORD in the German garden scene. Plantings at flower shows with either annuals or perennials seem to be called "prairie" for no more reason than that they contain a few grasses or have a distinctly informal style. The word is increasingly popular in Britain, too, used to describe borders that combine big grasses with perennials. So why are Europeans suddenly in love with a word that describes such a quintessentially American habitat? And do these prairies actually have much in common with the real thing? Answers to these questions are best found at Hermannshof, a remarkable garden in Weinheim, in Germany's Rhine valley.

Weinheim is a classically beautiful town surrounded by wooded hills topped by castles — every tourist's vision of the land of Grimm's fairy tales. The Hermannshof property consists of a solid 19th-century house, and five and a half acres of garden, all owned by the Freudenberg engineering company but open as a public space. The garden includes a large lawn and many majestic trees, around which a wide variety of planting schemes ebb and flow. Each area is described as a "biotope," with particular characteristics of soil, light and moisture, for which ecologically appropriate plants have been selected. Some areas are naturalistic and low-maintenance; others involve a lot of annuals, and are higher maintenance but more colorful. All are designed for sustainability, to minimize inputs and maximize wildlife interest — German interest in environmental protection is deep and well-established.

Grasses and prairie plants form the planting schemes at Hermannshof in Germany, which is devoted to experiments in low-maintenance gardens that also attract wildlife.

Some plantings at Hermannshof reflect an interest in drought tolerance or suitability for shallow alkaline soils, the most successful being the yarrow and salvia area. Beds under trees rely on shade-tolerant species, while others are more "conventional," with familiar border flowers. Ornamental grasses make a great impact in many of the open areas, largely cultivars of the Asian *Miscanthus sinensis*, while in the prairie areas, North American species, such as *Andropogon gerardii*, *Sorghastrum nutans* and *Schizachyrium scoparium*, are the focus. The variety of plants is enough to keep the dedicated gardening visitor engaged for hours, while non-gardeners can lie on the grass and enjoy the scenery.

Hermannshof was opened to the public in 1983, funded by Freudenberg and the town council, as a *Sichtungsgarten*, one of those German words that needs a whole sentence to translate — it's a garden where plants are grown for evaluation and research as well as for ornament. Thus there is a strong didactic element. The idea is to illustrate to both the amateur gardener and the professional horticulturist, as well as to the landscape architect, the range of plants and plant combinations that will thrive in a particular region. Such gardens need to be seen in the context of a country where considerable effort (and research funds) have been put into designing sustainable planting schemes for public spaces, such as parks and urban roadsides. The first director at Hermannshof was Urs Walser, who had already worked within this field but felt that the planting schemes needed an added artistic element, with more attention paid to color combinations and other factors appreciated by the public.

Since 1998, the garden has been managed by Cassian Schmidt, who has worked as a landscape architect and in the nursery trade. Like many gardeners or landscape designers you meet in Germany, early in his career he worked at the nursery run by the late Countess von Zeppelin. Cassian has kept the plantings created by his predecessor, but added his own. His great love is American prairie flora, and the creation of several large-scale prairie-plant combinations has enhanced the garden's appeal, particularly from August to late October. Even later on, many prairie plants have beautiful seed heads, and can continue to look good into the winter. Many prairie species attract butterflies in large numbers, while their seeds, and those of accompanying grasses, are a

MARIANNE MAJERUS

magnet for many small bird species. Cassian's love of grasses began in the late 1980s when he worked with American nurseryman Kurt Bluemel, who selected many successful grass cultivars (including *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Cassian'). His first awareness of the prairie was when he did what so many Europeans do on their first trip to the United States — drive from coast to coast. The short-grass prairie of North Dakota made quite an impression.

The interest of Europeans in the prairie is not as perverse as it may appear. A great many of the most popular late-summer border plants are of North American origin — goldenrods, asters, coneflowers — which in many cases were introduced to Europe and garden varieties bred over a century ago. The current interest in prairies stems from wanting to develop a planting style that needs little maintenance, is good for wildlife and thrives on fertile soils. The latter point is important because it is on high-nutrient soils that weeds thrive, overwhelming plantings based on native European flora. Once established, prairie species compete well with weeds, forming dense, self-sustaining vegetation.

So successful has Cassian been with his prairie planting and his promotion of it through German garden and landscape journals that the concept has caught on. "Prairie" is even in danger of becoming cliché, being used by trend-conscious designers who have no understanding of the real thing.

A key part of Cassian's work at Hermannshof is a study of garden maintenance. All work is logged and recorded, so that by the end of the year he can tell how much time each planting needed. Identifying the factors that account for more or less maintenance is complicated, but one thing is clear: The nearer garden vegetation is to that which would exist naturally — strong-growing plants on fertile soils, shade- and drought-tolerant species under trees, etc. — the less work is needed.

Hermannshof is not only a very beautiful garden, but a dynamic research center, and we should be hearing more about it. For more information see sichtungsgarten-hermannshof.de. — **NOEL KINGSBURY**

Noel Kingsbury is a British gardener and writer whose books include Planting Design: Gardens in Time and Space *with Piet Oudolf (Timber Press, 2005) and* Vista: The Culture and Politics of Gardens, *co-edited with Tim Richardson (Frances Lincoln, 2005).*



ENCHANTED

The world's leading florist, Daniël Ost, translates his gift for organic sculpture into a garden-size realm of green

BY PENELOPE HILL PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLA BROWNE



On the grounds of a Belgian estate surrounded by beech woods, floral artist Daniël Ost designed a garden of green sculptures, clipping boxwood to resemble abstract, green flower heads and shaping hornbeams into columns. To the side of the house, hornbeam and lollipop-clipped *Prunus* surround an ivy-clad well.

Bending leaves, twisting twigs, placing gemlike seeds side by side

with a jeweller's skill and a botanist's eye, the Belgian floral artist Daniël Ost has set into motion a new sculptural language that bears no resemblance to traditional floral bouquets. Carpeting a lakeside with petals, studding chandeliers with orchids that hang like starbursts in the sky, building free-standing floral compositions that challenge sculpture's contemporary avant garde, Ost infuses his one-of-a-kind compositions with symbolism and the beauty of abstraction he finds in nature.

Ever versatile, the Belgian maverick prefers to work outside the box, and he readily moves from tabletop constructions in a vase to large-scale organic site-specific sculptures to permanent garden designs, transferring his expertise as a floral artist to each composition regardless of scale or format. Here on the grounds of a 25-acre estate in the green countryside near Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, his medium of choice was boxwood and hornbeam. His achievement was to conceive a garden as a three-dimensional abstract canvas, one that stands outside the house that was once home to the beloved Flemish landscape artist Edmond Verstraeten (1870-c. 1956).

Call it an enchanted forest: Placed center stage in the garden, two large *Buxus sempervirens* are each clipped with razor precision to resemble a giant flower head — or even a family gathered around a table. Stationed in the stable block at the front of the century-old brick house, they are boxwood abstracted, boxwood set free from traditionally pruned forms. Regularly clipped to templates created by Ost, each shrub is shaped into 16 individual wedgelike "petals" that remain distinct, yet part of a whole, with alpine strawberries planted in the center circle in spring.

The boxwood "flower heads" are just two of the many actors in this garden where the landscape unfolds like a play within a play. To the side of the house, four towering hornbeams are stationed around an old





Left: The delicate white flowers of a Carolina silverbell bloom on a graceful multi-stemmed specimen, framed against a green backdrop that is carpeted with shade-loving plants. Right: Near a grid of pathways, an oblong reflecting pool accentuates the geometric layout of the garden.





Here: The ivy-clad stone well in the center of the garden is guarded by tall columnar hornbeams that draw the eye to the grove of beech trees beyond. Opposite: Beautifully textured copper-brown peeling bark of a Japanese cherry (*Prunus serrulata*) provides year-round interest.

"FOR A **GREEN SPACE** LIKE THIS THERE WERE TWO THINGS TO NOTE: THERE SHOULD BE NO GRASS AND IT MUST BE **BEAUTIFUL** IN WINTER," SAYS OST.



ivy-clad well, as if to protect the restorative powers of the water within.

Perpendicular to the house, an oblong pool visually links the house to the garden, mirroring the rectilinear shapes of the windows that overlook it. Ost lined the pool and a grid of pathways with rows of columnar hornbeams, which he punctuated with mature specimens of flowering trees — a giant dogwood (*Cornus controversa*), crabapple (*Malus* 'Golden Hornet'), quince (*Cydonia oblonga*), witch-hazel (*Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Jelena'). They create a gentle transition between the controlled landscape and the ancient woodland of beech that buffers house and garden just beyond.

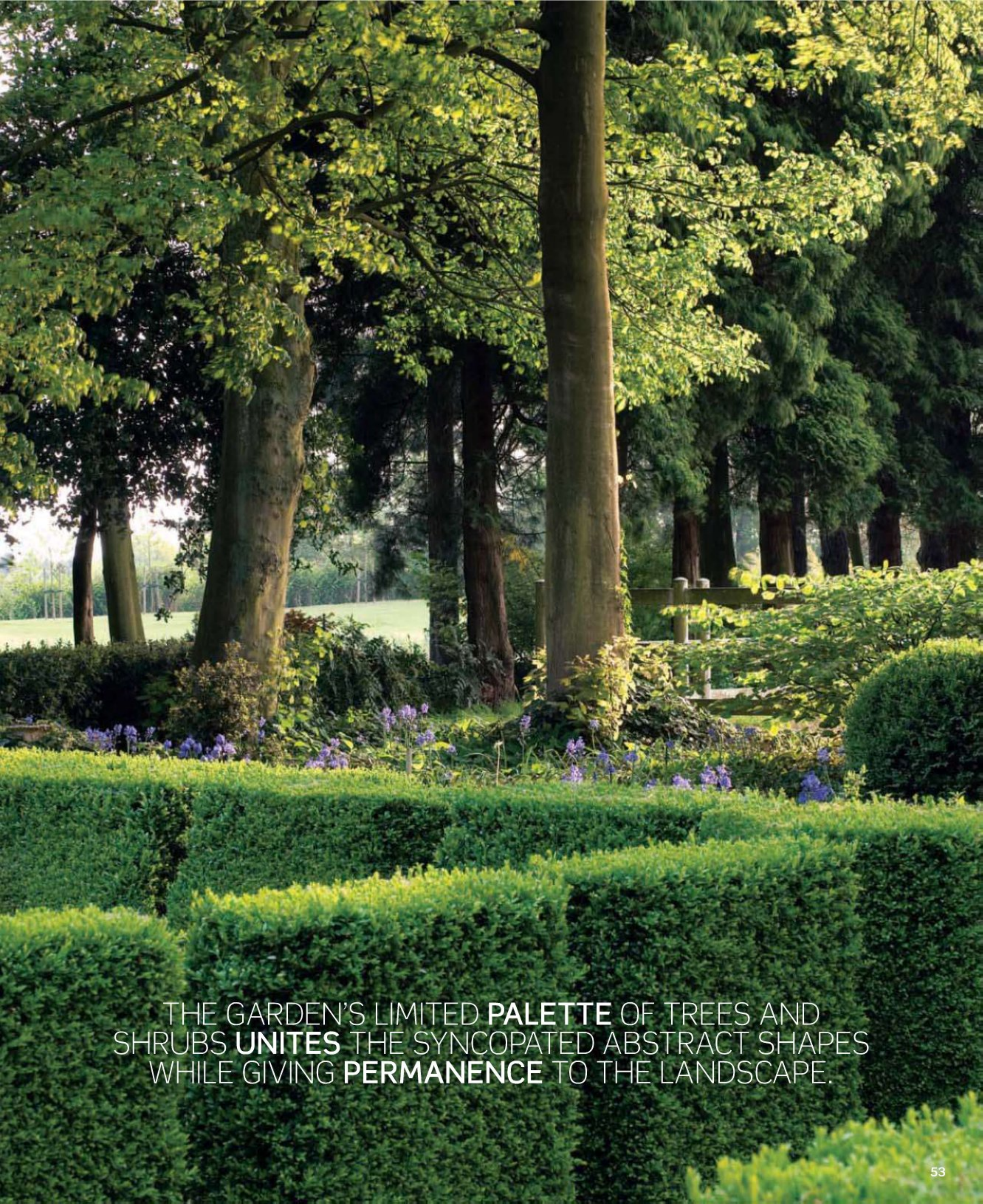
Everywhere geometric shapes are balanced. At the entrance to the house, two columns of hornbeams flank the doorway like sentinels, while low oblong lengths of boxwood planted along the nearby path mimic rows of garden benches. These horizontal and vertical planes are posed near balls of *Prunus* x *eminens* 'Umbraculifera', grafted onto Japanese cherry. The garden's limited palette of evergreen trees and shrubs unites the cast of syncopated abstract shapes, while giving permanence to the landscape throughout the seasons. Says Ost, "For a green space like this there were two things to note: There should be no grass — as people suffer from cutting the grass all the time — and it must be beautiful in winter."

Though Ost turns to nature as his primary guide, design inspiration comes from many sources, including German photographer Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932) whose black-and-white botanical portraits reveal the structural qualities of plants. With a passion fueled by his studies under the revered landscape designer and Zen priest Shunmyo Masuno, he is also a frequent visitor to Japan where he creates many of his labor-intensive floral sculptures. Currently working on a number of diverse projects in Paris, Thailand and the Middle East, he is unwilling to over-explain his design philosophy: "As food is less tasty when there is too much explanation, so it is with my garden design," he says. For more information see danielost.be.





Left above: A path between the clipped boxwoods opens to a vista of beech woods and park land. Left below: The garden is planted in the stable block in front of the century-old house. Opposite: Bluebells multiply beneath beech trees at the garden's edge.

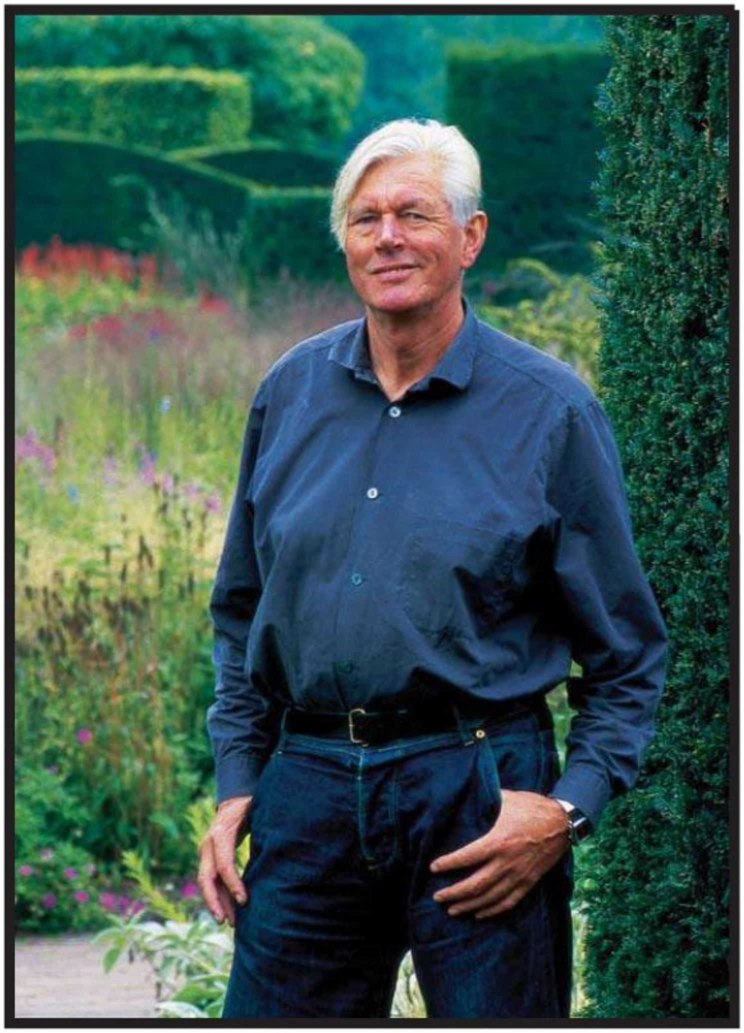


THE GARDEN'S LIMITED **PALETTE** OF TREES AND SHRUBS **UNITES** THE SYNCOPATED ABSTRACT SHAPES WHILE GIVING **PERMANENCE** TO THE LANDSCAPE.

Here: View into the new front garden with Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum* 'Atropurpureum') on the right and yellow *Helenium* at center stage. The famous "wave" hedges terminate the sightline like a stage set. Opposite: Piet Oudolf.



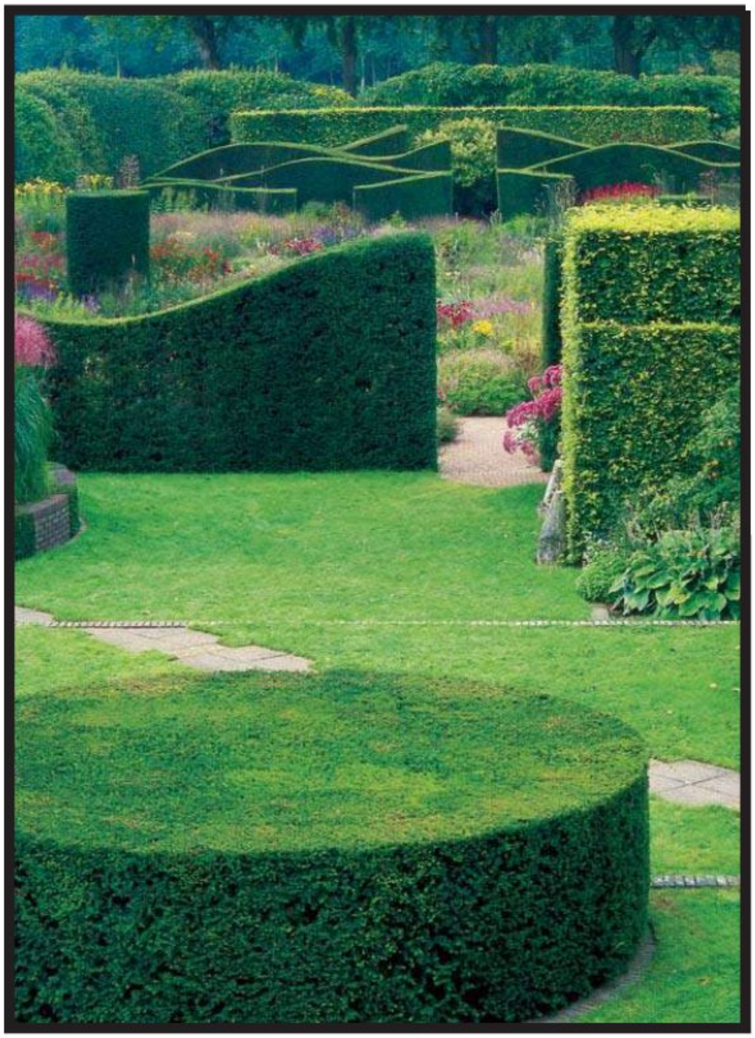




lawn to lush

As a leading exponent of New Wave planting design, Piet Oudolf could not allow the grass to grow under his feet when he revamped his own garden in the Netherlands

BY JOANNA FORTNAM PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERRY HARPUR





For anyone who earns a living as a planting designer,

the pressure to keep the garden in camera-ready condition at all times must be intense. So as the primary torchbearer for the New Wave planting movement — and the designer of a number of high-profile public projects in the United States, including the Lurie Garden at Millennium Park in Chicago and the Battery and the High Line in New York — Piet Oudolf could have agonized over the recent renovation of his own garden in the Netherlands. But that's not how he tells it — a laconic manner and pragmatic Dutch attitude is the Oudolf way — and for him to take up a lawn and transform a garden with perennials and grasses is all in a day's work.

Based in Hummelo, in the quiet countryside of eastern Netherlands, the Oudolf home is a hub for dedicated plantspeople from the world over. While the nursery behind the house is run by Piet's wife Anja, the front garden is an opportunity for Oudolf to showcase the New Wave aesthetic, the essence of which is to convey a sense of how plants in a wild setting grow together. The resulting effect is naturalistic, rather than purely ecological, but visually beautiful as well as wildlife-friendly.

Over time, the lessons learned from his work have mounted up, leaving Oudolf's home turf on borrowed time.

Above: An overview of the garden with clipped yew drum. Right: Looking back at the house, with purple *Agastache* and pink flowers of *Echinacea purpurea* 'Vintage Wine' in the foreground. Top right is a large mass of mauve flowered *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus'.







He describes his thoughts on the front yard, familiar to anyone who's been through the renovation spin cycle: "First you like it, then it's in between for a while. Then, OK, it's time for some changes. But it's a lot of work, and who's going to do it?" But part of the equation for Oudolf is that his garden is about his job. "You like to give people the right idea about what you do. The garden was no longer a good example of my work. So it was time for an update — we wanted to get rid of the lawn and bring in more plants."

The garden flows from a generous brick terrace in front of the house out to the edge of the property through a sequence of formally laid out rooms enclosed by boundary hedges of beech, *Acer campestre*, *Cornus mas* and amelanchier, and formal hedges of yew. In the revamped section laid over what was once lawn, the effect now is of a rich, plump quilt of texture and color through which one swishes along the red brick paths, over the knee in plants. Tall plants are kept to the sides, so as not to block the view of the garden's statuesque sculpted hedges — the famous oceanlike "waves" that dominate the end of the garden, and the topiary drums and cylinders that punctuate the scene.

A key design goal was to create "a more meadowlike feeling," says Oudolf. "I wanted to be able to oversee all the plants from where you walk." As a result, he selected plants of a height and density that allow the viewer to take in the scene all in one sweep as opposed to the sense of concealment and stature created by masses of very tall perennials and grasses frequently seen elsewhere in his work. Broad red brick paths, already used throughout the garden, made the walking easy.

The open, airy ambience is one Oudolf found worked well in the very different arena of designing for public gardens, but it is a look that can be







1 The shrub *Clerodendrum trichotomum* produces white flowers that eventually turn into dark blue berries. Oudolf admits that its size can be "a little problematic" in all but the most spacious borders. In the background *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Malepartus' does well on any garden soil in full sun.

2 The towering umbelliferous flower heads of *Peucedanum verticillare* reach up to 6.5 feet. The plant self-seeds well on good moisture-retaining soil, and is a prime example of the kind of architectural presence Oudolf looks for in a plant.

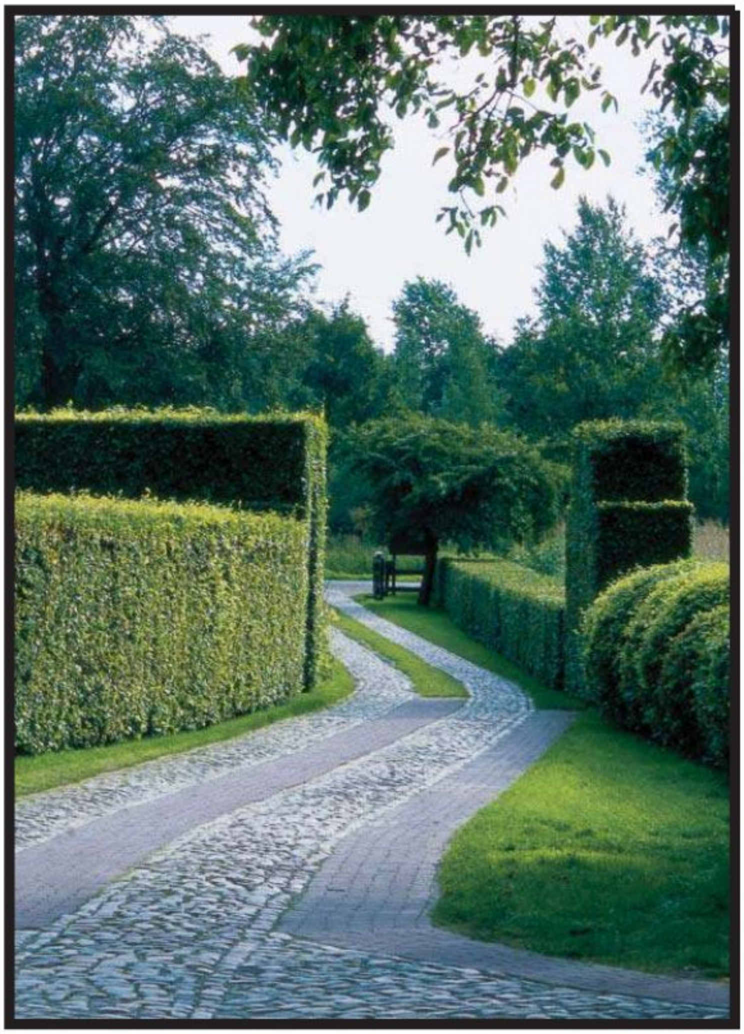
3 The blue-green summer foliage of the tall switch grass *Panicum virgatum* 'Cloud Nine'. This plant starts to come into its own late in the season and eventually makes great swaths of gold seed heads in autumn.

4 A view of a border through to farmland beyond that includes pink *Geranium soboliferum* and *Echinacea* 'Vintage Wine' in the foreground and the bright yellow daisylike flowers of prairie plant *Verbesina alternifolia* on the right.









made to work on an intimate scale. So explosive are the colors, forms and textures of the new "meadow" that it instantly made a more dramatic foreground for the hedges than the lawn ever could. English photographer Jerry Harpur, who has photographed the garden many times, approves: "I much prefer it. The lawn was so ordinary. Now it's a modern garden."

The design is not intended to be wildly experimental, but incorporates a lifetime's worth of looking at and working with plants: "You know what you're doing, and you always push forward," explains Oudolf. "I wanted to try things, but not to extremes. There are situations where I've done something once and then thought, 'If I'd done it that way, it would have been better.' So we made improvements to schemes I'd already tried."

He admits that even here he's not always satisfied with his work: "Not always 100 percent. I take a notebook with me when I walk around. One's own garden is always more complex than one's clients'. There are too many beautiful plants, and you want to see how they work. It's too tempting." Coming into its own in late summer, the garden is a feast for the senses (and for bumble bees and birds) that will continue to pack a punch into the monochromatic fall and winter months — a fitting canvas in progress by a master painter in plants.

For more on the work of Piet Oudolf and his garden, see oudolf.com.

Left: Winding brick paths are overhung with plants, including the brilliant red flowers of *Sedum* 'Red Cauli' in the foreground. Oudolf favors sedums for their long-lasting, late-season color. Above right: The cart track driveway, picked out in granite cobblestones and brick.

LESSONS FROM HUMMELO:

- To keep weeding to a minimum, the Oudolfs covered the entire planting area with a mulch of fine pine bark, to a depth of about three to four inches.
- Oudolf demystifies maintenance. He says: "A simple way to decide whether or not plants need division is to ask: 'Are they starting to dominate?' But the right size can be decided on an individual basis."
- His professional approach is more controlled: "In public gardens it's different — you always need to consult the drawings or the plan. How big was this group? How much space was allotted there? You always go back to the original plan and keep things in control that way."
- North American native plants and grasses have the look and stamina Oudolf favors, but he also likes their late-flowering, fall colors and winter textures. See millenniumpark.org (click on Art & Architecture, then the Lurie Garden) for a list of natives.
- Oudolf is unsentimental about flowers: "A garden has an ambience that you create. The plants don't have to be beautiful, necessarily." Consider subtleties, like soft, scented prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*.

bloom boom

Europe's modern floral sculpture movement gets back to nature

BY ISABEL GILBERT PALMER



JACQUES CASTANÉ, MARTIN LOWE, DANIEL METTOUDI



DESIGNER: Jacques Castagné **ORIGIN:** Born 1962, Saint Céré, France **WORK:** Paris and worldwide **MATERIALS:** Fountain grass, gloriosa lily, sweet pea, switchgrass, allium, coral bead plant **HE SAYS:** "This piece was inspired by Cirque Du Soleil's *Alegría*, which means jubilation. The design, like the show, has its own language, and when I had finished, the materials had transformed themselves into a mad garden or perhaps vegetal fireworks. I was challenged to work with recycled objects, which in this case were glass jars, and I combined them with my floral material."



DESIGNER: Geert Pattyn **ORIGIN:** Born 1958, Wervick, Belgium **WORK:** Belgium and worldwide **MATERIAL:** Willow **HE SAYS:** "I very often work with wood, and I am continually collecting promising pieces to use. Although my favorite is Tatarian dogwood (*Cornus alba*), for this piece I used willow from my own garden. The idea for the sculpture came from the annual rings of the tree itself. I made one large 'annual ring,' banding and enclosing short branches of varying diameters to hold the form both artistically and practically. Their compact circle forms also repeat my intention many times over."

Establishing themselves as today's modernist botanical sculptors, Europe's most revered and mimicked floral designers are leading a quiet revolution born of a renewed and intensified relationship with nature. Linked by philosophy while retaining their artistic autonomy, these designers are moved by nature's vast inspirational reservoir, showing a concern for botanical origins, species, innate organization and form. The sculptural qualities of the floral designs shown here illustrate an approach that has begun to be known as "organic essentialism" — a new "less is more" principle that is defined not only by its relationship to nature but by restraint and lack of ornamentation.



DESIGNER: Pim Van den Akker **ORIGIN:** Born 1976, Delft, Netherlands **WORK:** The Netherlands and worldwide **MATERIALS:** Bromeliad, carnation, scabiosa, clematis, dried reeds **HE SAYS:** "My inspiration for this hanging piece came from the image of a bull. I wanted to show strength and fragility in the same piece and combined materials to do so. In this piece, I give depth, meaning and symbols that may not be at first recognizable. I like viewers to look and discover my ideas."

LEFT: BART VAN LEUVEN; RIGHT: COURTESY PIM VAN DEN AKKER



PATRICK SORDOILLET/STICHTING KUNSTBOEK

DESIGNER: Muriel Le Couls **ORIGIN:** Born 1967, Harfleur, France **WORK:** Paris and worldwide **MATERIALS:** Rush, allium **SHE SAYS:** "This piece is called 'Corset'; it was inspired by haute couture. It is a composition where the botanical material and structure work together. Using a mannequin to carry the piece as I worked, my approach here was a little like a couturier's. Through this symbiotic creative partnership, a harmonious ensemble was created."





DESIGNER: Marcel Van Dijk **ORIGIN:** Born 1959, Meerlo, Netherlands **WORK:** The Netherlands and Europe **MATERIALS:** Grass tree, snowball viburnum **HE SAYS:** "I needed a collection of floral designs for my book *Natural Interior Design*. This photograph ultimately inspired a commission, so I happily duplicated the design for a client. Both the bronze as a mineral and the texture of the container inspired me to make this piece, which is over one meter high. I can see the form of a boat within it."

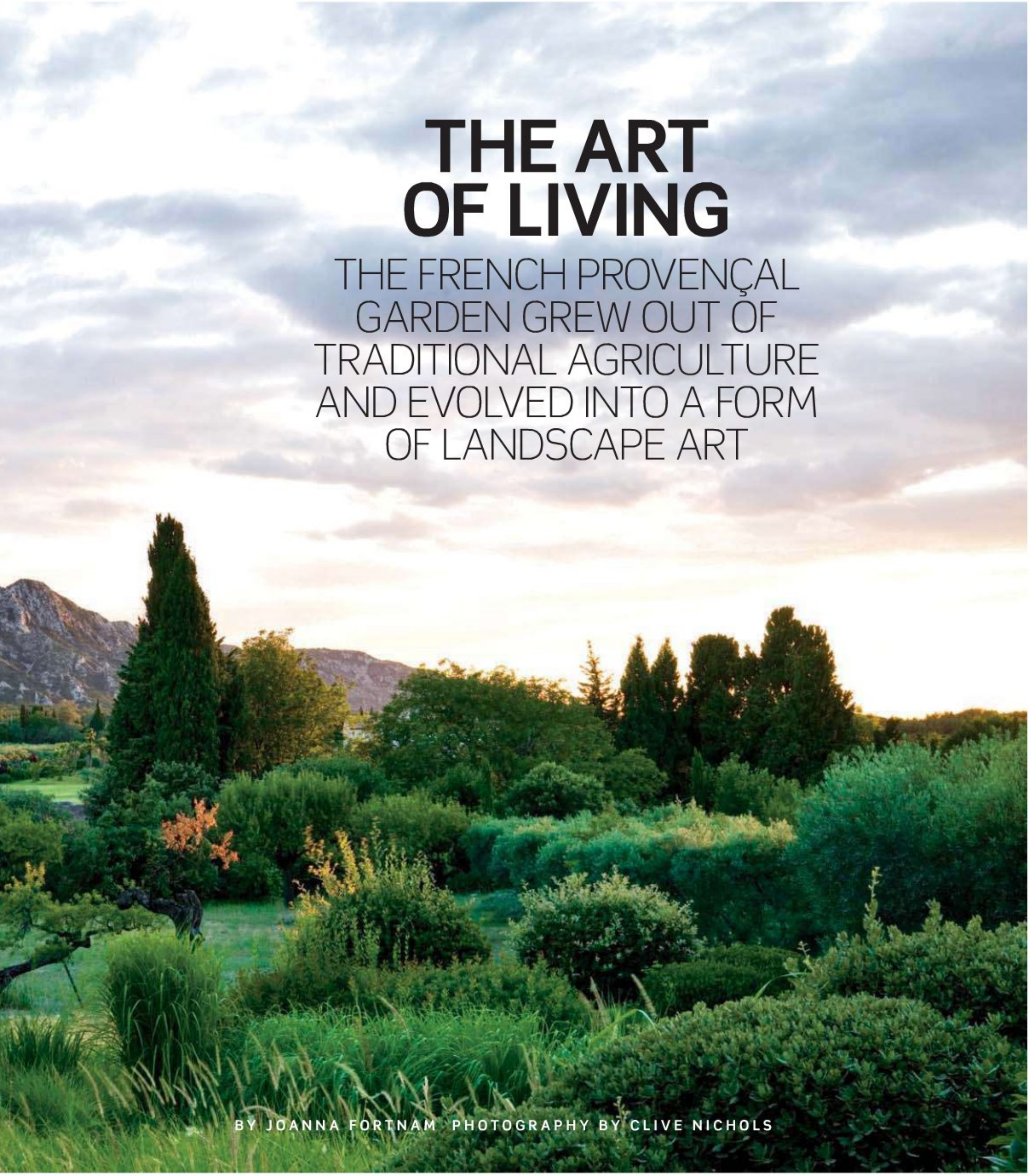


DESIGNER: Ann Desmet **ORIGIN:** Born 1956, Kortrijk, Belgium **WORK:** Belgium **MATERIALS:** Discarded wood, elecampane, branched bur-reed **SHE SAYS:** "I live in a country manor house surrounded by a huge garden and many trees. One autumn day after the woodsmen had been to trim and tidy, this odd piece begged me to rescue it. This is how I often begin; a material inspires me to work with it, and I then follow my imagination to see what evolves."

BART VAN LEUVEN (2)

To see more floral sculpture by the designers presented here, order their books through editofloris.com. Also, visit the following websites: eglantier.be, naturalart.nl, pimdesigned.com, oogenlust.nl, newlandsbook.com.


Seen from the garden of Mas Benoit, the limestone crags of Les Alpilles dominate the agricultural plain of Provence. At this isolated site, designer Alain David Idoux aimed to blend his design seamlessly with the timeless landscape. In the process he ensured the evolution of Provençal garden style.



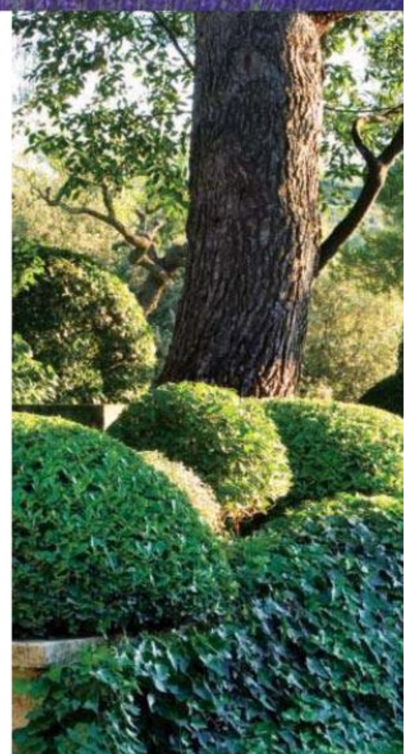
THE ART OF LIVING

THE FRENCH PROVENÇAL GARDEN GREW OUT OF TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE AND EVOLVED INTO A FORM OF LANDSCAPE ART

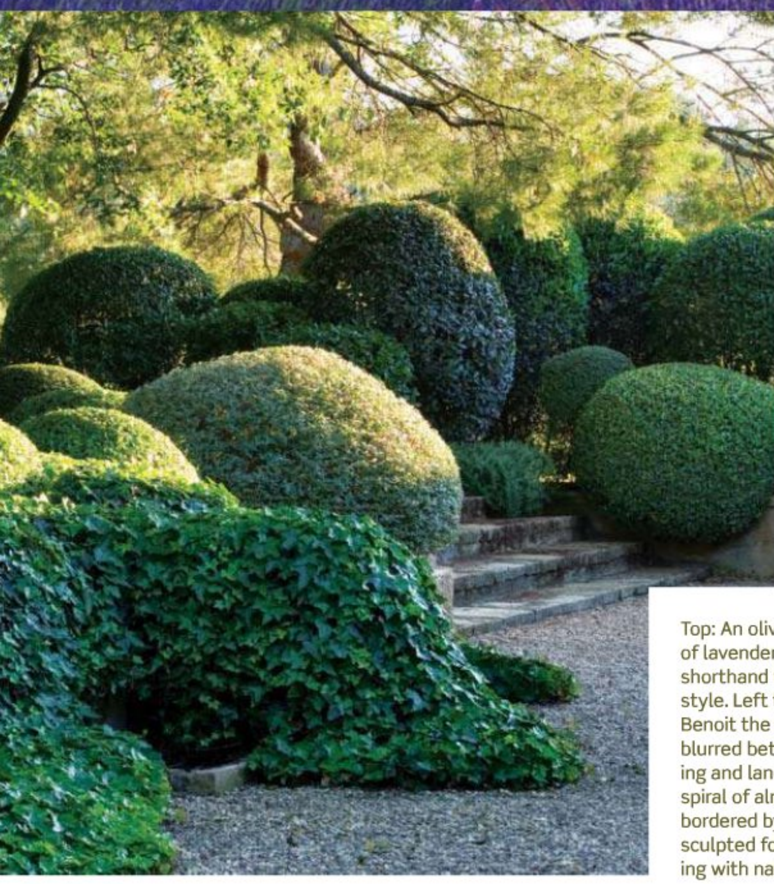
BY JOANNA FORTNAM PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLIVE NICHOLS











Top: An olive tree in a sea of lavender is the global shorthand for Provençal style. Left to right: At Mas Benoit the boundary is blurred between gardening and land art — Idoux's spiral of almond trees bordered by limestone; sculpted foliage contrasting with natural forms.

SCENE: SIPPING A GLASS OF ROSÉ ON THE TERRACE OF LA MIRANDE, a chic hotel in Avignon, with aqueous April sunlight filtering through the trees. Purpose of visit: Louisa Jones' annual Garden Week in Provence, a hand-picked selection of the region's best private gardens. Result: Perfect bliss.

An area of France cultivated since Roman times, Provence is internationally considered the capital of the art of living. The food and wine, historic towns, vineyards and pastures, elegant bastides have attracted European aesthetes and artists at least since Vincent van Gogh immortalized the sunflowers, olive groves and irises of the region more than a century ago.

Canadian-born Louisa Jones arrived in Avignon in the 1970s. Her interest in gardens burgeoned into books on the subject, most recently *New Gardens in Provence* ($50, Stewart, Tabori & Chang), and today she has carved out a reputation as the English speaker's inside track on French gardens.

The traditions of Mediterranean agriculture, which created a way of life here, gave rise to the modern Provençal garden. With their organized layouts, productive and aromatic plants, and shady resting places often positioned as extensions to arbors and pergolas, these modern gardens still contain (in highly stylized form) all a peasant farmer could need. Today, the elemental landscape of mountain, scrub and wild horizon is increasingly an inspiration to designers — and this story (and Louisa's Garden Week) deals with both sorts of gardens.

The Land Art of Mas Benoit

Mas Benoit is an example of the work of Alain David Idoux, a self-styled "sculptor of landscapes." The garden's most surprising elements are its land art, from Idoux's spiral of almond trees within a bed of white limestone, to the tree "walkers" created from inverted tree trunks, designed by Marc Nucera.

But in the end these are only moments within the whole. The emphasis is on successive planes leading to the horizon; repeatedly one is brought to face the white peaks in the distance of the Alpilles, the picturesque range that rises from the plain of the Rhone. Lines are cast out into the wild blue yonder — formal lawn melts into fields, an avenue of olives stretching to a distant walnut tree. An obelisk centered in a triangle of lavender points to a hill town far in the distance. Groves of native trees, on the edges of the lawn, are sculpted as though wind blown, their green depths luring the eye into obscurity. But no formal sightlines or "viewpoints" insist on attention.

Transitions are subtle, so there is much to notice. Lightly idealized scenes invite comparison to Asian gardens — for example, woodland paths lead from the swimming pool to a sun-drenched stony clearing, with a dry river of cactus and rocks and an obelisk. Everywhere art melds into nature.



An Open-Air Gallery Southeast of Avignon

Marc Nucera shares the spare yet minimalist sensibility of Idoux and influential designer Nicole de Vesian (see page 77), favoring natives such as almonds, green and white oaks, box and laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*) for his green architecture.

He does not seek to impose himself on a tree, but rather his pruning brings out the existing character of each individual plant and shapes it according to the context of the garden. Much in demand among the fashionable set are the seats and sculptures that he creates from entire tree trunks.

His own garden, set southeast of Avignon, is filled with works in progress, both large and small scale. He veers between the minute detailing of box plants in pots, each with its own mini-setting — against a wall, grouped on a table, backed by a friend's painting — and larger-scale work that occupies a neighboring field like an open-air gallery. In each case he has created a miniature garden scene around the seat or sculpture that includes the triad of plant, stone and iron — the three basic ingredients of his art and ideal landscape.





Opposite: Marc Nucera's rough-hewn sculpture is altarlike against a green backdrop. This page, from top: Impromptu seating made from a tree trunk is a Nucera signature; "tree walkers" made from inverted branches stride across a meadow; Nucera transforming a tree.





Nucera's tree pruning technique is intended to bring out the essential character of the tree, drawing attention to its form but stopping short of tight control or artifice. This fine balance often evokes a sense of Japanese style but never overtly imitates it.



LA LOUVE — THE GARDEN OF NICOLE DE VESIAN

After retiring from her work as a designer, perhaps most notably for Hermés, Nicole de Vesian bought a simple village house and an adjoining farm building on the southern edge of Bonnieux in 1986. In her garden, which she called La Louve (the she-wolf, shown below), she set about developing a unique look that re-imagined the Provençal style, influenced by her own taste and in later years through a filter influenced by Japanese traditions. She drew on a plant palette of clipped globes and domes of rosemary, thyme, dorycnium, lavender, laurel, cistus, box and oak, which she assembled into varied tapestries. To this she added individualistic touches with stones and found objects, and once her garden was published in *Marie Claire* in the '90s, it went on to be copied around the world. The elements of her approach are:

Sculpting foliage Snipping shrubs with nail scissors was not unknown to de Vesian. She mostly eschewed flowers, although her lavender field, where flowering plants contrast with shorn ones, became a signature.

Live and let live Free expression balanced her obsessive side — no two shapes are ever the same, and she valued whimsical juxtapositions over symmetry.

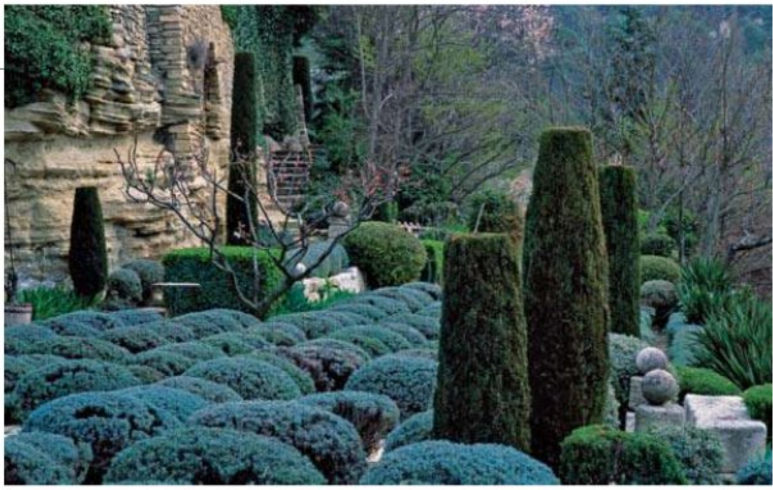
Found objects Fieldstones, masonry fragments, old timbers, salvaged iron — de Vesian had a magpie eye for cast-off items that meld organic and man-made qualities.

Monochrome color Shades of green and gray make for a restful garden that fades into the wider landscape. Her assemblages of evergreen and ever-gray foliage plants offer complexity yet do not dominate.

The personal touch De Vesian put her individual stamp on everything, making fashion statements with the choice of each intriguing detail and playful collection.

Stones that rock Pebble mulches around trees begin randomly, but coalesce here and there into floor patterns that dance among the tapestry of plants.

JOELLE CAROLINE MAYER & GILLES LE SCANFF



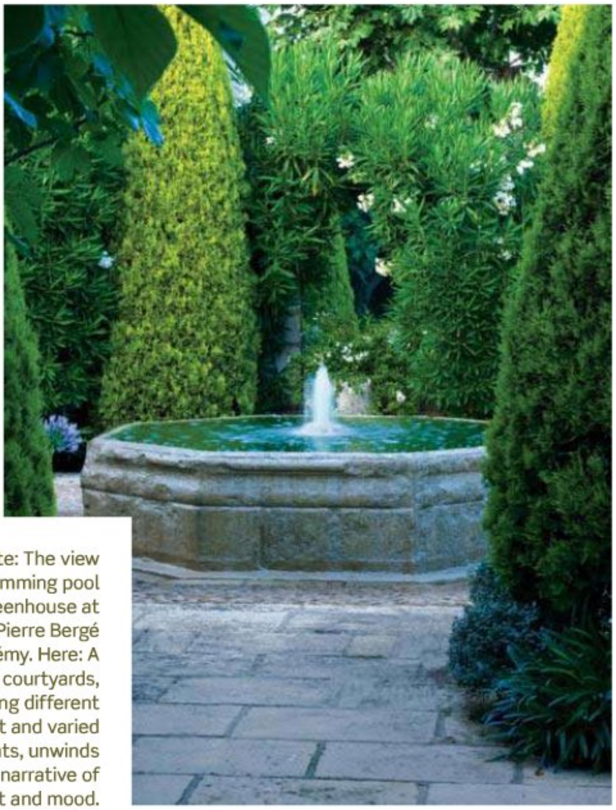


Domino Courtyards, Saint-Rémy de Provence

In the '90s, fashion mogul Pierre Bergé (business partner of Yves Saint Laurent) bought a house in the now supremely fashionable town of Saint-Rémy. He gradually acquired neighboring properties and with help from architect Hugues Bosc and garden designer Michel Semini incorporated them into one walled domain of linking courtyards. This linear organization of separate gardens lines up like dominoes — one moves from one space to the next to the next, according to whether one wants to swim, pick fruit or sit down with a drink.

Michel Semini's architectural approach favors no lawn but tough plants that furnish a space rather than demanding attention. The play of light and shade, openness and enclosure, makes for an inviting ambience. Water appears in almost every room, as do artful vignettes such as a stone fawn drawing close to a pool as if to drink. The difficulties of knitting various properties together at different times have not skewed the overall picture, but nor is the layout immediately clear. Contradiction is part of the fun, in the unfolding of different rooms, where some vistas are actually mirrors, and where the main axis is only discovered through a small doorway or around a corner. The result is a dense juxtaposition of private and social spaces that emphasizes entertainment as a key element of the outdoor life.





Opposite: The view across the swimming pool toward the greenhouse at the home of Pierre Bergé in Saint-Rémy. Here: A succession of courtyards, each offering different places to sit and varied focal points, unwinds like a garden narrative of texture, light and mood.







A Second Home at Mas de Baraquet

This gracious small country house — or *bastide*, as they are called in the south of France — is owned by the Atlanta-based interior designer Ginny Magher and her family, who had it restored by the local husband and wife team Bruno and Dominique Lafourcade. The ingenuity of the restoration was to create a gentrified second home out of an abandoned farm building, albeit one of massive stone walls, commanding views and classic proportions.

Dominique Lafourcade excels in a highly compartmentalized style of garden, dividing it into rooms — but she did not duck the task of relating the house to its site, which here was challenging given that the house sits on a divide between wild hillside (to the rear) and rolling open plains (at the front). Lafourcade's most original stroke was to create a terrace along the façade of the house to frame views of the horizon with the shade of Provence's plane trees. At the back, she made a wild garden that melts comfortably into rough, hilly pasture.

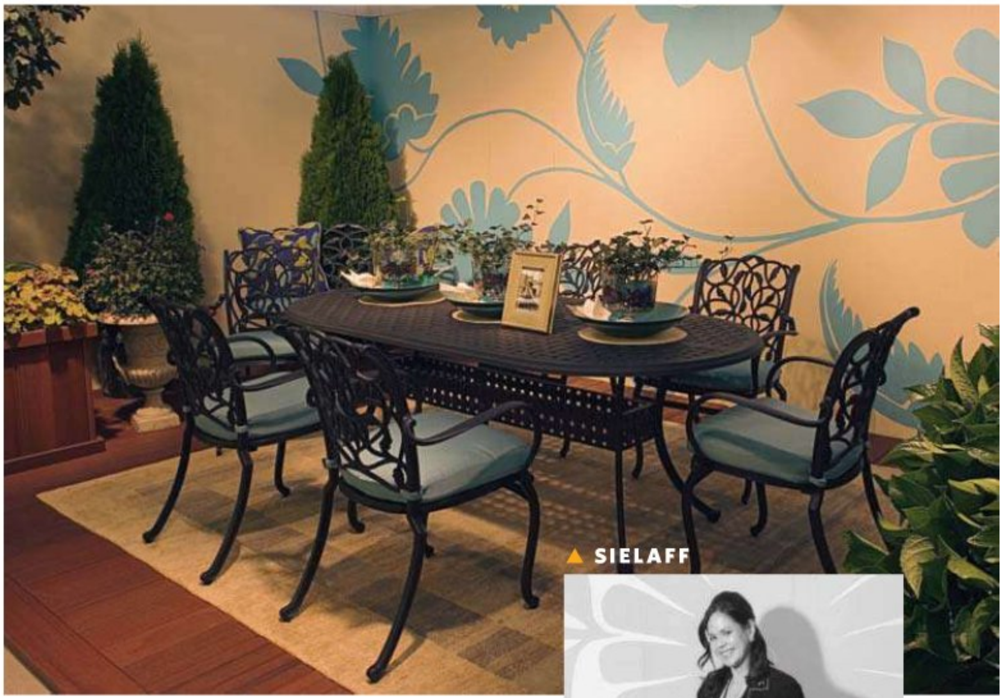
Other notable elements are the long pergola that connects house with rose garden and pool, an elegant stone fountain and a small formal garden with mosaic pebble paths. Ginny Magher's own eye for classic French style contributes the elegant vignettes of clipped evergreens in pots and stone sculptures, but stops short of unnecessary ornamentation.

For more on the work of Louisa Jones and the Garden Week in Provence, see gardeninprovence.com/louisajones or e-mail her at ljones@orange.fr. For further information on La Mirande hotel (where the garden tour is based), see la-mirande.fr.



Left: The front of the house at Mas de Baraquet is dominated by a row of large London plane trees, their shade creating ideal conditions for the social hub of the garden. This open terrace contrasts with the more intricate and enclosed spaces behind the house (right).

fresh garden vignettes from our favorite urban landscape designers



▲ SIELAFF



Garden Design magazine and Chicago's Merchandise Mart proudly presented their second annual Exterior Design Showcase at the 2007 International Casual Furnishings & Accessories Market. Top designers were partnered with the best in exterior décor to showcase the latest trends in furnishings, fabrics and accessories.

Vibrant Outdoor Party

Interior designer Grace Sielaff of M. Grace Designs used an outdoor dining set from Summer Classics to underscore the classic look of her exterior display. "I wanted to create a traditional dining experience surrounded by elements of whimsy by using vibrant colors and flowers," says Sielaff. Pink Double Knock Out® Roses, Big Daddy™ Hydrangea and heuchera from Novalis® Plants That Work in the Shade™ helped to maintain the conventional look, while a painted floral background provided the "fun" side of the display. Trex® decking also played a part, and will again in upcoming designs created by Sielaff. "This was the first time I had used Trex® and I found it to be very adaptable to my plans. I have already decided to use it in future projects," said Sielaff.

exterior design





CASTELLANOS





MITCHELL & WOLEBEN-MEADE

Urban Bamboo Grove

Ideas can come from the most unexpected places. Just ask designer Guillermo Castellanos of Mito Landscape Design. Surely the most compelling aspect of his vignette has to be the display's sawed-off tree trunks. "A violent storm had just come through the Chicago area. I needed to come up with some type of flooring befitting my bamboo grove concept. The downed trees were my inspiration for this urban, forest-like creation," says Castellanos. Complimenting the oak-tree slices are hostas and grasses from Novalis® Plants That Work® and hanging chairs and a hammock from Outback Chair Company. "I really liked the organic, natural form of these pieces," said Castellanos. Painted bamboo and all-weather fabric from Outback Chair completed this woodsy garden hideaway.

showcase

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Seaside Party

Who doesn't love to entertain by the water? We might dream of such a fête, but designers Carrie Woleben-Meade and Shannon Mitchell of Mariani Landscapes made it a reality with their "entertaining alfresco" vignette. Against a backdrop of teal, the designers placed a dune daybed and ottoman by Barlow Tyrie, set amongst palms, ornamental grasses, yucca and bamboo. And like all good hosts, they know the key to a successful party is in the details: a simple bowl of oranges provided the perfect pop of color to this deceptively effortless design; candle lanterns added ambience while also providing a warm, welcoming atmosphere to the constructed boardwalk; and white sand, seashells and boulders helped bring this tropical display to life. The total effect? A social gathering anyone would love to crash.

Under the Sea

This playful vignette was literally a bright spot in the Casual Furnishings Market furniture show thanks to its vibrant color scheme. "I immediately fell in love with Veneman's coral-red furniture from the moment I laid eyes on it," proclaims designer Claire Kettelkamp of Kettelkamp & Kettelkamp Landscape Architecture. Using the coffee table as a planter was another highlight of the display. "Several of my clients saw that idea and have asked me to incorporate it into their designs too," she says. A clamshell-shaped lounge chair further enhanced the "under the sea" experience while creating a luxurious spot for curling up with a good book. Trex® decking in multiple colors made for an appealing finishing touch.



▲ SHAKOOR



Poolside Party

Sometimes it takes just one piece of furniture to come up with a whole slew of ideas for an outdoor room. Lloyd/Flanders' double adjustable chaise did just that for designer Ryan Kettelkamp of Kettelkamp & Kettelkamp Landscape Architecture. "I really wanted to show the flexibility of the furniture," said Kettelkamp. "And Ralph Lauren had just come out with a new outdoor fabric called Watergarden. It proved instrumental in my Asian-inspired poolside theme." A quartered coffee table also served as a functional component of this outdoor retreat. Sky-blue strips of cut glass were laid meticulously along the bedrock slate paver tiles from Down to Earth®. Hanging lanterns and coral candles created the feeling of a casual poolside party full of fun, food and frolic.

Upper West Side Sexy

Inspired by the charm of old New York, designer Erin Shakoor of Shakoor Interiors wanted her garden vignette to fuse the concept of an ornate exterior with the clean lines of contemporary furniture, creating a beautiful contrast between the two. "I envisioned a rooftop or veranda setting with an outdoor feel," says Shakoor, "something really urban but with a twist." Helping to create that vision was outdoor furniture by JANUS et Cie. "I was so excited to work with JANUS pieces, which to me are wildly beautiful yet highly functional." Shakoor goes on to say that one of her favorites was the bed-like lounge that took center stage in the vignette. "I liked the idea of creating a space that appealed to people who like to relax while they eat," says Shakoor. Foliage plants provided by Novalis® Plants That Work® and synthetic slate tile from Down to Earth® further enhanced this simple elegant look.

PLANT HUNTER BY DAN HINKLEY

Hydrangea Remix

I HAD LAST BEEN IN BELGIUM WHEN I WAS 18 years old, negotiating Europe on $5 a day. Sadly enough, I only retain vestigial memories of the *Mannequin Pis* in Brussels from that ancient time. The balance of the country and its culture — other than long-developed affections for Bruegel, Rubens, Godiva and endive — have been, it seems, entirely wasted on youth.

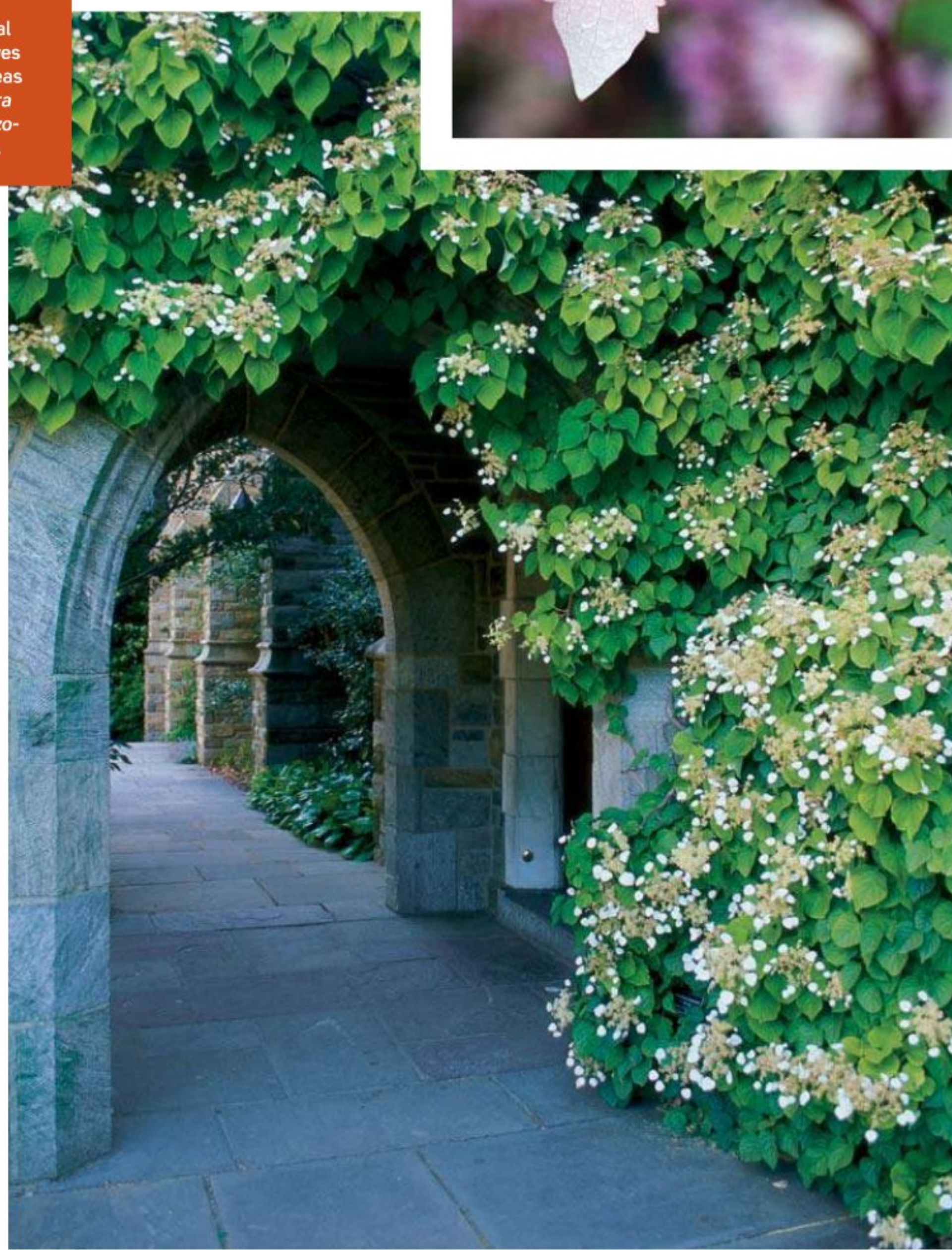
Thus I was jet-laggedly enchanted upon my arrival in Ghent last August with medieval towers and spires and a cool morning fog hinting of brackish canals and fresh pastries. Not that I had time to take in the sights, only evening pints on the square with friends from around the globe who had converged for three days of lectures at the first International Hydrangea Conference.

I gave my lecture — one of the first — in an embarrassingly faltering tongue, especially considering that English was the anointed language of the proceedings. A colleague from England, Mr. Maurice Foster, and I spoke, respectively, on *Hydrangea* species observed in the wild and how the lesser-known ones translate to a garden setting. Later we congratulated ourselves on our astute observations and stellar recitals, Mr. Foster actually deserving the praise.

The remaining two and a half days were devoted to systematic taxonomists, botanists and plant breeders whose raison d'être was to prove once and for all that they have never known anything about hydrangeas. Thus it seems to go in the fast lane of contemporary plant science, as new laboratory techniques dramatically alter perceptions of familial relationships in the plant kingdom. It is rather troubling to learn of profound changes, of things no longer true that I, as a one-time college teacher, had failed numerous students for not knowing.

Gratefully in Ghent, I learned that hydrangeas are still in the Hydrangeaceae. That fact might have seemed less salient had I not learned a few days later that Aceraceae, the family of my beloved maples, has recently been discarded in favor of the soapberry family, the Sapindaceae. Meanwhile, sweet gums or *Liquidambar* no longer share a flat with the witch hazels in Hotel Hamamelidaceae, but are in a newly constructed aggregate





At the first International Hydrangea Conference, held in Belgium, several hydrangea relatives became hydrangeas indeed: *Cardiandra* (above) and *Schizophragma* (below).

TOP TO BOTTOM: ANDREA JONES; ROB CARDILLO

known as the Altingiaceae. I found this last factoid curiously timely as I had only come upon the genus *Altingia* six months prior while in the mountains of North Vietnam and had excitedly checked it off my life list of hamamelids observed in the wild. (No, I do not really maintain such a list.)

Nearly all other past assertions of my vast knowledge of the hydrangea family, however, were unceremoniously rent asunder. The notion that hydrangeas are part of the elephantine conglomerate of the saxifrage family is now considered so very last century. They now stand proud and tall and quite alone. They do not even sit cozily, knees touching, in taxonomic quarters with *Philadelphus* and *Deutzia*, which have been segregated into their own rarified quarters miles away.

Hydrangeas are now believed to be most closely related to a plant family known as the Loasaceae. (Bear with me thou now truly bored garden designers: This is actually rather interesting.) I first encountered *Loasa*, an herbaceous perennial with somewhat charming nodding flowers, found mainly in the tropics of the New World, in 1998 during a most inauspicious yet electrifying moment while out walking — one would not soon forget such angry stinging hairs inflicted on a moon-white epidermis. My lovely hydrangeas are now connected to this duplicitous relative on the family tree, one that has not even the slightest superficial resemblance.

During the subsequent days of the conference, the disappearing act continued as scientists waved their wands and aberrant members of the hydrangea family dissolved into a taxonomic void. Rarified genera such as *Platycrater*, *Decumaria*, *Schizophragma*, *Broussaisia* and even the herbaceous members of the family — *Cardiandra*, *Kirengeshoma* and *Deinanthe* — were disrobed of their former identities and provided new cloth, all morphing into *Hydrangea*. Not as surprising was the absorption of a shrub known as *Dichroa*, for which I have a strong affection.

I have observed or collected the startling sapphire-blue fruit of *Dichroa febrifuga* during numerous trips across Asia: Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, China and Vietnam. (Its specific epithet, *febrifuga*, references its use as a febrifuge or fever reducer in traditional medicine.) Two years ago I had received an excited missive from Dr. Sandra Reed, a research geneticist with the USDA, who had successfully

hybridized one of my dichroas with *Hydrangea macrophylla*. This ability to procreate is often the smoking gun that leads to taxonomic revisions, as it reveals a closer relationship between genera than previously thought.

During the last day of the conference, several of these *Dichroa* x *Hydrangea* hybrids, which had appeared spontaneously in a garden in New Zealand, were unveiled — to a deafening silence. Dazzled by colors never before imagined in the genus, which were followed by a bounty of long-lasting, opulent cerulean fruit, this congress of breeders, taxonomists and general racketeers were lost in dreams of fame and fortune.

With my relationship to and understanding of hydrangeas now on the rocks, it was with exasperated relief that my bruised ego took leave of Ghent and, with a few other charmed souls, took up residence at Herkenrode, the ancestral estate of the Artois family, noted brewers since the 14th century, as guests of Philippe de Spoelberch.

Philippe continues in the hoppy traditions of his ancestors (there was a live tap of Stella within arm's reach of the dining table); however, it was not beer but trees that had brought me into this splendid manor and landscape. Herkenrode represents one of the finest private arboretums of well-documented trees and shrubs in Europe. For three days, an ever-changing guest list dissected the colossal inventories of magnolia, birch, maples, oaks, styrax, beech and countless others (including a few hydrangeas that had only been hydrangeas for a few hours) in this sublime and historic landscape.

Philippe de Spoelberch's contributions to and support of horticulture around the world have not been insignificant. And his generosity of passion and financial support will culminate in the public opening of Arboretum Wespelaar, some 37 acres located just north of Philippe's private estate, which he has given to the citizens of Belgium and all keen plantspeople of the world to enjoy. I left Herkenrode en route to the Hamptons, with the loft of having a passion for trees reignited, tempered by a reluctant acknowledgment of the need to examine the systematics of ordering our natural world. And I left Belgium with a profound appreciation for the opportunity to reinstate in my mind, beyond a bronze incontinent child, the charms of a country that had been stolen by time.

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The Big Spartan

Ian Hamilton Finlay: The visionary behind Little Sparta, a 20th-century avant-garde landmark

Above: Word play and provocation are the hallmarks of Little Sparta. Below: A bronze memorial to Finlay's epic standoff against local authorities, which he likened to Sparta v. Athens.



ANDREW LAWSON (2)

HE WAS A POET, PRINT-MAKER, APHORIST AND conceptual artist, and most of all, Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) was an agent provocateur of international renown. His great neoclassical garden design, the five hilltop acres of Stonypath Farm in Lanarkshire between Edinburgh and Glasgow, became his life's work. He called it Little Sparta.

Son of a rumrunner, or so Finlay said, he was born in the Bahamas. He spent time in Glasgow as well as the Orkney Islands, and

served in the Royal Army Service Corps in the Second World War. Notably, Finlay studied briefly at the Glasgow School of Art, the spiritual home of that other influential Scottish architect/designer, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. It was while working as a shepherd in the Orkneys that he found himself. He dreamt there of no less than "visionary happiness in discoursing with classically clad philosophers in a kind of green-grassed grove." Those sylvan spaces from Greco-Roman antiquity — and his imagination — doubtless inspired his masterpiece and life work.

In fact, the day we first explored Little Sparta in 1994, we found Finlay himself out hoeing his vegetable patch. It was leeks, to be exact. One of us allowed his use of space in the Little Sparta groves was masterly. In wellies and his signature chemise de travail, a one-piece blue cotton jumpsuit, Finlay looked up and shyly smiled, pleased at our reaction. He reckoned that ancient Romans — maybe even Virgil — would have tended their own vegetable patches.

Sacred groves of antiquity flourish in the mind when visiting Little Sparta, which Finlay began in 1966, having moved his family to what was then an abandoned farm. His gardens are now a series of rooms enclosed by hedgerow plantings, elder, alder, blackthorn and hawthorn hedges and trees marking spatial boundaries. Finlay pruned out breaks in the plantings to allow for splendid views of the surrounding Pentland Hills as larger visual counterpoints to the defined spaces. This orchestration is a virtuoso performance.

The progression through the groves is punctuated, liberally, with sculptural artifacts of stone, terra cotta and brick, beautifully carved with aphorisms that reflect Finlay's obsessions. On the ancients: "The world has been empty since the Romans"; on militaria: Finlay's bronze statue of Apollo not holding a lyre but instead an automatic weapon; on the French Revolution: "The Present Order is the Disorder of the Future"; and, Finlay's political wit: "Bring Back the Birch" — placed next to an alder tree. (The British expression conveys "Restore conservative family values," literally, in support of corporal punishment. — Ed.)

Finlay and concrete poetry became





synonymous: He wanted the design of words to be as clear as their meanings. He collaborated with carvers, graphic artists and sculptors as needed to create his concretized poetry, but the concept and design were his own. Finlay was also one of the first to use neon for concrete poetry. His Wild Hawthorn Press, founded with Jessie McGuffie Sheeler, published his own and other contemporaries' work.

Finlay's aesthetic was not well-received in Scotland, but artists at Black Mountain College in North Carolina warmly embraced it. There Finlay found sympathetic philosophies in the Bauhaus artist Josef Albers and in the nascent work of composer John Cage.

The Little Sparta name was born when Finlay sought to change the status of a large garden outbuilding from gallery to "temple." Local authorities refused to give tax-exempt status to Finlay's newly designated sacred building, and the local sheriff confiscated many of his artworks. Well-connected American friends intervened to retrieve them. To memorialize the battle, Finlay called the gardens Little Sparta, recalling the fierce rivalry between Sparta and Athens. On his new

"Finlay's legacy is his interest in garden design through the symbolic and emblematic, not just flower-growing. He was driven by culture, not horticulture."



ANDREW LAWSON

"Temple of Apollo" in the heart of the garden, he inscribed: "To Apollo — His Music — His Missiles — His Muses." His was virtuosic wit.

Finlay's son Alec, also a conceptual artist and clearly inspired by his father's work, wrote "Little Sparta is a composition: one made over three decades from earth, water and sky, from plants and trees, shadows and light; from inscriptions, statues and temples. Growing up there I learnt that poems were not just found in books. A poem can also be an inscribed stone or plaque, placed in the landscape."

On a summer's day in 1994, we first trekked off Dunsyre Road through three gates and cattle grids, up the 900-yard-long track to Little Sparta. On arrival, we were met by the wiry and fierce Mr. Finlay himself. With more than certainty, he turned us away: His gardens were not open until July. Unbending, Finlay reckoned that our wanting to include Little Sparta in a book, as we did, was insufficient cause for an exception to the rule. Equally persistent, we were finally admitted in August, and we later showed his gardens in our book, *Paradise Transformed: The Private Garden for the Twenty-First Century* (The Monacelli Press, 1996).

Ian Hamilton Finlay's legacy is his interest in garden design through the symbolic and the emblematic, not just in its flower-growing aspects. He was driven, he declared, by culture, not just horticulture. The art historian Sir Roy Strong, garden designer and former director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, praised Finlay and Little Sparta: "This garden is one of the few made post-1945 which must not be lost. It remains to me still the only really original garden made in this country since that date." In December 2004, a poll of Scottish arts professionals voted Little Sparta the most important work of Scottish art in the past 200 years.

—**GUY COOPER AND GORDON TAYLOR**

Little Sparta opens to the public from June 15 to October 14, Fridays to Sundays, 2:30 to 5 p.m. For more information see littlesparta.org. For reservations for groups of 10 or more, e-mail little_sparta@btinternet.com. Guy Cooper and Gordon Taylor, partners of Landscape Design Limited, have designed gardens in Britain, Europe and the United States, including the master plan and installation on 36 acres at Sir Elton John's estate in Berkshire. They created HGTV's The Curious Gardeners, *and have written widely on landscape design, including* Mirrors of Paradise: The Gardens of Fernando Caruncho *and* The Curious Gardeners: Six Elements of Garden Design.


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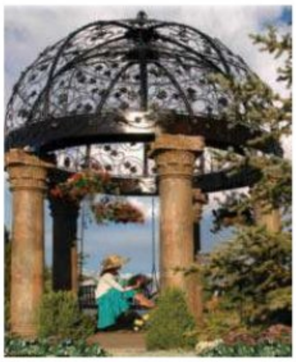
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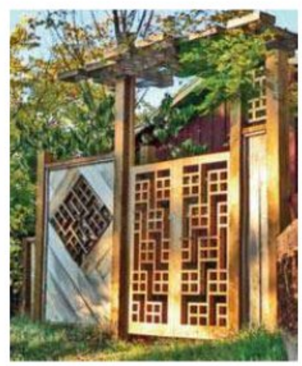
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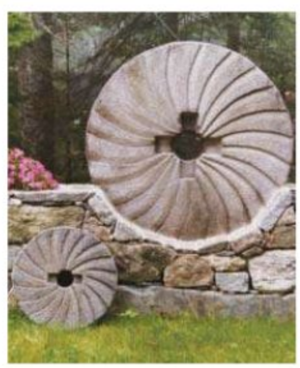
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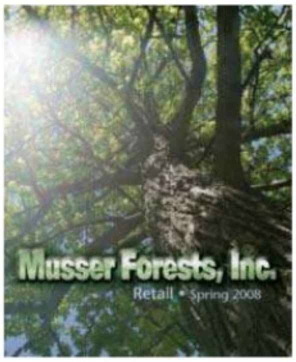
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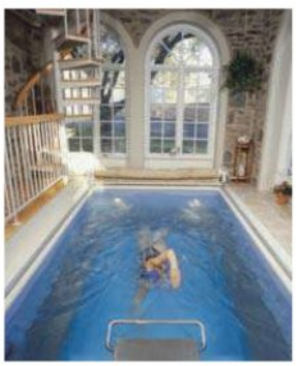
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SANDY CHILEWICH

Accidental Innovator

SANDY CHILEWICH IS A TEXTILE DESIGN ENTREPRENEUR WHOSE REVOLUTIONARY and very organic-looking outdoor fabrics are actually made of woven PVC, so they wipe clean. With unlikely, inelegant materials, Chilewich designs the cutting edge by happy accident. For example, her top-selling RayBowls for MoMA Design Store were an experiment using leftover pantyhose (she founded Hue fashion hosiery). Now, Chilewich has turned to the garden for inspiration for her latest rugs, placemats and upholstery fabrics. —TJW







MoMA RayBowls (top). Vinyl indoor-outdoor tabletop accessories (above). Textile designer Sandy Chilewich (right). Patterns for her nature-inspired spring collection include Grass (above) and Woodgrain (below).

Q. *You rediscovered vinyl in an unlikely place.*

A. Yes, the webbing on 1950s lawn chairs!

Q. *And it was all by accident?*

A. I tried it for my RayBowls, and it didn't work at all. But I loved the feel of it, and we've adapted it now for rugs.

Q. *Yours must be the world's first woven wood-grain-patterned PVC.*

A. I see the irony. But I wanted to interpret something as organic as walnut grain in vinyl. We're introducing chipboard next.

Q. *And I saw tulips on the studio floor.*

A. We've just done grasses. Next, we're experimenting with huge blow-up botanicals for rugs that are not corny, still modernist.

Q. *It's not easy, being green. You're unapologetic about PVC, a politically incorrect material.*

A. It's actually sustainable. Hotels and restaurants tell me they've hugely cut energy consumption using Chilewich, since it doesn't need laundering. Green is not always obvious.

Q. *Do you have one great designer inspiration?*

A. Lucienne Day, the British textile designer. It is hard to look at her stuff and not want to copy it. Although I'm very careful not to.

Q. *How so?*

A. It's horrifying not to do something unique. I like being original. My father taught me to take pride in being the first and only, bringing something new to the table.

Q. *So to speak. How does your garden grow?*

A. I was an early pioneer on Fire Island with really simple, low-maintenance grasses.

Q. *The early adopter gardener.*

A. And I'm so busy now; gardening with more than grasses is guilt-inducing.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MOMA; VICTOR SCHRAGER (3)



















